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WHEN THE BRITISH CAME

Frontispiece—When the British Came.

"HE WAS GONE, WITH BOWED HEAD AND NEVER A BACKWARD LOOK."

See page 15

WHEN

The British Came

By

Harriet T. Comstock

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THEN MARCHED THE BRAVE
MOLLY, THE DRUMMER BOY

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CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I

THE HIDING OF THE TREASURE 13

CHAPTER II

THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOSS 26

CHAPTER III

POOR PETER, ... 43

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING THE NEWS IN JONES' LANE 57

CHAPTER V

IN THE SECRET PASSAGE 80

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSENGER FROM WASHINGTON 96

CHAPTER VII

INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS 117

CHAPTER VIII

CORNERED 132

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

"He was gone, with bowed head and never a backward look" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"Anetje came back with the box in her arms" . . 19

"He struck at the light with his riding whip" . . 69

"'I forbid your entering,' she said distinctly" . 137

WHEN THE BRITISH CAME

WHEN THE BRITISH CAME

CHAPTER I

THE HIDING OF THE TREASURE

"IT is all that we have, Anetje, and we must save it! It is a terrible responsibility for two—mere girls!" There was a laugh in Femmetia's voice that belied the modesty of her words. She sat on the floor, beside the broad fireplace, and eyed her pretty sister, who sat opposite, a perfect picture of despair.

"I do not suppose, Anetje Stryker, that by any chance you have thought of a place to hide this treasure?" Fem spoke in good, broad Dutch, which was quite proper in that time and place. "Oh, Netje, if you were only a boy!"

"Well, I'm not!" sighed the girl, "and I have not thought of a place. I would not dare to hide it if I had. It is perfectly awful, Fem!"

Anetje shook her yellow pigtails dolefully, and looked into the fire.

"I've thought of a place," Fem calmly announced, "and I'm going to take things into my own hands!" This remark had the effect desired. Anetje looked up interested and alarmed.

"You mean to take the—the treasure and hide it, without Father and Mother knowing?" she whispered.

Fem nodded.

"Where is the place?"

"Right under this hearthstone!" Anetje sprang up as if the stone were an explosive.

"Femmetia!" she gasped, and then sat heavily down.

"Yes," the older girl went on, "if we leave it to Father he'll worry and put it off, and Mother will fret and leave it to him, and in the meantime the British will come and settle the question by taking the treasure back to England. No; I'm going to take things in my own hands. It is bad enough to be a girl in these stirring times, without acting like one! You are girl

enough for one family. Look at that stone, Netje!"

Netje obeyed, lying flat down to get a better view.

"It is quite loose," Fem laughed. "I have been working at it for weeks. To-night is our chance. Father and Mother are sleeping—just hear them!" Indeed, the audible snores from above gave proof that Fem was right.

"The servants are at church. Even Cato went. It is now or never for the hiding of the treasure."

"But perhaps the British will not land after all," Anetje quivered. "They may not, you know."

"I am sure they will," comforted Fem. "In any case we ought to be ready for them. In that box upstairs is our fortune. Anetje, just think of those diamonds and pearls, left to us by Grandmother Stryker! She used to say we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we did not live up to the jewels. There isn't a family in Midtown that has anything to compare with them. Are you going to leave them around

loose and let the British walk off with that box under their arms just because you thought they might not come! Fie, Netje! General Washington is taking precautions. He doesn't go about acting upon the idea that the foe may not land. He's ready for them, and I'm going to follow his example. General Washington and I think alike on all great questions!" The little Dutch patriot struck an attitude that was so comical that even Netje's face broke into a slow smile.

"What shall I do?" she asked softly, "for I suppose you want me to help, or you would not have told me."

"Exactly," nodded Fem. "I want you to raise that end of the stone." Anetje tugged at it, and to her surprise it responded to her effort. Fem worked at her end of the slab with bated breath, and the stone was soon standing on end.

"Dig!" she then briefly commanded, and bent to her own task. Netje looked at her pretty plump hands in alarm.

"It's dirt!" she panted in disgust.

"Of course," laughed Fem. "What did you

expect, dough? Pitch in, Netje, you can wash afterward."

For a few moments there was silence while the dirt flew; then there was a hole sufficiently deep to bury the treasure.

"Now, Netje," said Fem, "you must creep through Mother's room and bring that box!"

"I'll wake them!" chattered Netje.

"Then I'll shake the life out of you!" Fem pointed her finger warningly. "I'm going to gather the silver together, and we must hurry. Pewter will have to do for us while we entertain the British nobility—"

"But the key of the silver-closet?" gasped Netje.

"Is in my pocket. I rifled Father's pocket after he went to bed."

Anetje's blue eyes widened with horror. "You're no better than a common thief!" she groaned.

Fem laughed lightly. "I'm sorry to hear it," she said. "I flattered myself that I was a most uncommon one. Now, Netje, do not stand gaping and preaching. Go! You'll be glad

enough to eat with silver and wear your share of the jewels by and by. Take off your shoes!"

Anetje obeyed and departed, tiptoeing through the darkness on her plump little feet. Fem, in like stealthy fashion, ran to the oak closet and took the precious silver spoons, forks, sugar-bowl, tongs, and so forth that were valued above all price by the thrifty Dutch family.

"I'll leave a fork and spoon for father and mother," smiled Fem. "Thief or no thief, I believe in the proprieties."

Presently Anetje came back with the box of jewels in her arms. She was breathing hard from excitement and haste.

"The money-bag is in this box," she whispered. "Perhaps we'll need the money, but I couldn't get the box open. The key is in Mother's pocket, and I refuse to steal it!"

"Oh, well," nodded Fem, ignoring the taunt, "we'll probably need the money after our British guests go more than we are likely to while they are here. Put the box in, my saint. I'll wrap the silver in this old table-cloth, and then—for the finish!"

When the British Came.

"ANETJE CAME BACK WITH THE BOX IN HER ARMS."

Into the excavation the treasure was reverently laid, and, after a quarter of an hour of hard work, the stone was in its place.

"It looks rather bumpetty," said Anetje, looking anxiously at the stone.

"We'll have to dance on it whenever we can," answered Fem. "Just for now, we'll hope nobody will notice."

The two girls sat down exhausted.

"I feel," quivered Anetje, "as if we had buried some one real dear with our own hands."

"We look so, too," laughed Fem, stretching forth her grimy fingers toward the fire's glow.

"And to think of the fearsome things that may be going to happen!" groaned Netje, hiding her hands beneath her trim apron. "Oh, Fem, it is awful!"

"I think it's rather fun," Fem heartlessly replied, "now that we have nothing to do but outwit a lot of silly soldiers. I can see the sport of the thing."

"Outwit them!" groaned Netje. "Oh! you think you are very wise, Fem, but you are only talking. Think of us with a half-sick father,

one old black man and woman, and a small black boy! What could we do against all the King's men?"

"Perhaps the whole army will not come down upon us at once," ventured Fem. "If they come in detachments I think Cato and I can manage them; that is if you will do your part."

"My part!" murmured Anetje, turning pale. "Do you take me for a bold Dutch soldier? My part! I'll have you know, Fem, that *my* part was finished when I buried the jewels."

"Oh, dear!" laughingly sighed Fem. "You have not begun your part yet! You must be polite, and entertain our British guests. You must soften their hearts while Cato and I—break their heads!" Fem was shaking with laughter. "You may not believe it, Netje, but when this war is over, I'm going to figure in history, and so are you, if I have to drag you in by the hair of your head."

Anetje caught her flaxen pigtails in grimy but protecting fingers.

"Play false!" she said in horrified whisper. "Play false and make up to—to the British?

I'd rather dig up the jewels and give them to them! Think shame to yourself, Femmetia, for joking in such an unmaidenly way in the face of an awful danger!"

Fem was struggling with laughter. "You were born a beauty," she chuckled, "but I was born to be great. I feel it! I know it! This war is General Washington's chance and mine! England is going to hear of him and me! Anetje, you may not realize it, but you are sitting on the hearthstone with a genuine Dutch heroine!"

Anetje tried not to laugh, but the dimples would break through the soft roundness of her pretty pink cheeks. "I hear Cæsar singing," she said, springing to her feet. "We were not any too soon."

Both sisters went to the window. They had sat up to let the servants in, and now that their other task was finished, they were glad to be free to go to bed. Up the lane leading from the main road, the three servants came. Old Cæsar, Juno, and "little gran'son Cato," who was taller than his grandparents, and well past his

sixteenth year, but would always be little Cato to them.

The three had been to meetin', and there had been an "awakenin.' " The glory was still shining on the dusky faces, that were distinct in the white moonshine.

The awakened ones were singing a revival tune of pathetic beauty as they came along. They had lowered their voices, but in the solemn, white silence, the tune rose and fell sweetly.

"How peaceful and beautiful it is," whispered Anetje, her heart touched by the scene. "Surely God will not let war and bloodshed come."

"King George may," Fem broke in gleefully. "I have less confidence in him. But we are ready!"

"I believe," shuddered Netje, "that you are actually thirsting for—for—blood!"

Fem put her arms around her pretty sister. "If only I were a boy!" she whispered half in earnest, "I think I would not mind. I would fight for you all right gladly. The King is wrong, Netje dear, and if we hope to have peace

and freedom by and by, we must struggle for it now. It seems quite plain to me, and—and I am willing to do what I can to help!''

Together the girls went and let the servants in. Gently and lovingly they talked to them, in whispers, about the wonderful ''movin' of the Spirit,'' then they parted with a kindly good-night.

CHAPTER II

THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOSS

"GIRLS, we have been robbed!" Femmetia and Anetje sprang up at the words and stared into the pale face of their mother.

"Never mind!" said Fem sleepily, "it might have been a great deal worse!"

"Worse! You talk like a mad one. It could not possibly be worse. Everything is gone! Jewels, money, everything but two silver forks and spoons and the pewter. We must try and keep this from your father. I fear it would kill him."

"Oh, we will," Anetje chimed in. "We will keep it from him. It all depends upon you, Mother. Fem and I will never say a word."

"I do not see how we can live without the money." The mother's eyes filled with tears. "Father needs so many things now that he is not strong."

"We'll work," comforted Fem, "and we'll do without ourselves. Father shall never suffer."

Somehow she had not planned the night before to mislead her father and mother to this extent. Vaguely she had expected to tell them the treasure was hidden and safe, but now a new thought came to her quick brain. She would not speak at present, and, unless some one was accused, she would let the story circulate that they had been robbed. It would divert the British attention, and perhaps save them from much discomfort and trouble. She looked at Anetje, and Anetje returned an understanding glance, but Fem was reckoning without her father. A half-hour later, when she and Anetje entered the living-room, they faced that august person as he stood upon the hearthstone, his pale, stern face turned upon his wife.

"I tell you, Gretchen," he was saying, "pewter is very disagreeable to me. I am a plain man, and can do without much, but I do not forget what is proper, and the silver on the table I will have!"

The condition that faced the family was one that must be met.

"Get the silver, Femmetia!" commanded the fretful voice. "I fear your mother thinks we better hide it in case the British come. I fear nothing. No king's men are going to force pewter upon my table. The silver bring!"

Fem moved feebly toward the oak closet.

"Your mother the key has!" said the weak voice.

Anetje laughed nervously, and her father frowned upon her.

"Jan," it was the mother who spoke, "I feared it would kill you to know, but what you see is all that we have left. We have been robbed!"

"Robbed!" cried the thin voice. "Robbed! And I was going to have Cæsar hide the silver and jewels to-day! How did the thieves get in? What door or window was open? Where are the footprints? Show them to me!" He was rushing about wildly. Anetje, pale and trembling, clung to Fem.

"Not a door or window was unfastened,"

Mother was saying. "And as the good God hears me, Jan, not a footmark leads away from the house!"

"Then the thieves are hidden within! I go to find them! Give me my gun! I am yet a man!" He started for the door, but Fem was there before him and barred the way.

"Father," she panted, "I am the thief!"

The excited man fell back.

"You!" he breathed; "you!"

"Yes." Fem's arms were around him now. "You know, Father, if you had a great strong son, you would trust him, now wouldn't you?"

"Not too far," the father answered. But Fem saw the twinkle in his eye, and took courage.

"Yes, you would, Father dear. You are not strong, and mother is nervous, and you would just trust your son—if—if he were wise as—I. You know you are always *going* to do things, Father; do not shake your head, you know you are. That comes of being a scholar instead of a farmer. I'm sixteen, Father, and better than any boy. You take my word for it." She was leading the tall, gaunt figure to the armchair at

the head of the table, as she talked. "And Anetje and I have hidden all the treasure in a safe place. You can trust me. Now, Father, eat your breakfast, it is pewter now, or pewter forever. No one can find the treasure, Father; it is well hidden."

"I like it not!" grumbled the querulous voice. "This be man's work, not maid's. Are you sure it is in a safe place?"

"Sure, Father! And it is better that the servants should not know. If a Britisher caught and tortured them how could they hold out? I've heard terrible things of the British doings, but the redcoats would not dare touch Netje or me."

"They'd better try!" cried the father hotly. "I'd like to see them!"

"No, no!" Anetje broke in. "Do not say that, Father. Put it another way. It—it—makes my blood run cold."

"Oh, it is all a joke," laughed Fem. By some unknown method, she had gathered the family around the table. "What did you tell Juno about the silver, Mother?" she asked.

"I told her I thought we better not use it just now until after the British had sailed away."

"Well, you were about right," laughed Anetje, regaining her composure. "And, indeed, Father, you can trust Fem and me. It is hidden in the most unlikely place."

"I was going to have Cæsar put it under this hearthstone," Father said, taking a slice of pork upon his plate with a despised pewter spoon—the silver one not being large enough. "I have often read that hearthstones made fine hiding-places."

Both girls started, but the father's near-sighted eyes did not notice. The mother did, and she gave a sigh of relief. If the wise father would have chosen that place, and if the girls had really done so, why all was well, and the mother turned her attention to matters at hand.

Mr. Stryker grumbled during the meal at the turn things had taken, bewailing the fact that there was no strong son to take charge of affairs.

"Ah! Father." Fem went behind his chair and nestled her head against his thin cheek. "Who knows? A son is but a name. 'Tis the

courage and wit that count. The war means less to us than many, perhaps. We have no men to fight and die—''

''There is myself!'' broke in the weak voice.

''Oh, Father dear, 'tis not the sick our General will call upon until the last. But a woman's wit may save the treasure, and if the day come when money is needed, and all other money is gone, there will be ours to help the cause along. Do you not see?''

Mr. Stryker drew the girl closer. Even more than pretty Netje, this merry, strong Fem was near his heart.

''But you can whisper to me the place, maid. I will then trust your wisdom.''

Fem patted his shoulder. ''Oh, you foolish old Father!'' she laughed. ''Can you not see that if you knew and the British should get you, they would punish you and perhaps drag the secret from you?''

''They will think I know. Whoever would believe that a man would trust such matters to his women?'' Mr. Stryker did not lightly yield.

"But I would tell them that Netje and I alone knew!" laughed Fem.

"Ah!" gasped Netje, "and what then?"

"And then would come in my wit!" Fem tossed her head. "My girl wit, which is often as good as boy strength. Leave it to us, Father. See, Mother already trusts us!"

Mrs. Stryker was dreamily looking at the hearth.

"Femmetia is very sagacious," she murmured, "and Anetje has a golden silence. 'Tis as well the servants have not the secret; and after all, the trouble may pass." And so the subject ended for the time.

Later in the day, taking advantage of the April warmth, Mr. and Mrs. Stryker drove seven miles away to Uncle Jacobus. Not long after they had gone, however, the spring day turned sullen, and by evening the air was so chilly that Femmetia thought her father and mother might remain away over night, and she and Netje laid plans for their own comfortable evening.

"I do not suppose Mother and Father could

protect us," Fem rattled on after the evening meal. "But just suppose, Netje, the British should drop in upon us to-night!"

"If you say another word on that subject," shivered Netje, "I'll go and sit in the kitchen. I wish Cato would bring more wood."

"I told him to, but likely as not he has forgotten. This new talk of the British landing has set his wits wool-gathering."

"British! British! Can you think of nothing else?" Anetje broke in. "Do talk of something else. I wonder what Cato would do if the British really did come?"

"To change the subject," slyly smiled Fem, "I do not know."

"Run, probably," mused Netje.

"I bet he would go with his betters, then," added Fem, "and I warrant he would not be in front! Cato has nerve."

"He has nerves. Just think how he believes his ghostly legends. Ah! Fem, let us keep Cato in here and make him tell us stories! He'll have to sit up awhile for Father anyway. Just hear the wind! It sounds like midwinter."

"Ca-to!" wailed Fem suddenly.

Netje jumped. "Do not be so disagreeable," she moaned. "Because you are as strong as—as a boy, you need not presume!"

"Comin', missy!" The words startled both girls, for they had not heard Cato enter the room. The boy dropped his load upon the hearthstone, and then stood straight, his teeth gleaming in the firelight.

"Dis sure am a night fur ghosts ter walk," he grinned. "Lor', I done hope massa an' missis won't come roun' by Jones' lane! Daddy is snorin' in de kitchen. It mak my blood run chill an' mammy she don' prayin' to Gawd to discombobolate de British to dat extent dat dar ain't no comfit anywhere. An' I'se got ter sit up till ten, massa don' tole me."

"Stay with us," coaxed Anetje, "and tell us some of your stories." Then, primly, "It is very silly to believe in ghosts, Cato; only the ignorant believe in such nonsense."

"Only dem *sees* tings!" Cato replied with comical logic. "But tain't *only* de ignorant. I don't b'leve even Miss Fem would go down

Jones' lane after dark when de lightnin' war a-flashin' an' de thunder war a-crashin', now would you, Miss Fem?"

The unconscious tribute to her bravery touched Femmetia.

"I do not like thunder and lightning, Cato," she said, "but if I had to be out of doors I would as soon be in Jones' lane as anywhere else."

"Den I reckon you ain't heard 'bout my Grandad Tonius. He's don' been actin' up again!"

"Oh! tell us," pleaded Femmetia. "Jones' lane is a good way off, and there isn't any thunder."

She nestled nearer the fire, for the sight of Cato's face stirred imagination.

"You all don' hear how my Grandad Tonius played de fiddle like a spirit?"

Anetje nodded.

"My grandad in de kitchen don' keep de ole fiddle fur me. He say I take after de odder grandad. Well, one night my Grandad Tonius took de fiddle an' went down to Jones' lane

so not to be 'sturbed. He had tinked out a debbletune, an' he want ter try it."

"What an old sinner!" laughed Fem.

"Yes'm. But he warn't all sinner. Lor', no. He tinked tunes, an' out dey come same as birds open dey moufs an' songs come."

"But their songs are always beautiful," said Anetje.

"Debble tunes are fine, too," broke in Cato. "De debble knows a good t'ing same as odder folks. It's de usin' ob it dat queers de debble. Well, my grandad found a comf'able stun, an' begun ter play. He looked 'round an' dere war nothin' in sight but a big black cloud in de west. Den Grandad begun de debble tune. It war like a long, soft call at de fust, an' sure as ye lib, jes' as de song got goin' wid a mighty crash, right out ob dat black cloud sprang Satan, large as life an' all togged out with claws an' tail an' horns!

" 'Now you play, Tonius, an' I'll dance,' said de gemman.

"An' de dance begun. Flash, bang, fiddle an' dance! So it went de hole night long. De

big tree behind my grandad shivered from top ter bottom. Dat tree stans dere to-day. You can see it fur your self, but yer better go when de sun shines. When de thunder cracks, the fiddle don' play to dis day an' de debble dances. If you *see* de debble it am a sign, an' ole Uncle Silas he tole Grandad Cæsar dis mornin' he saw de debble an' hear de fiddle las' night!''

''But, Cato,'' laughed Fem, ''there was no thunder last night.''

''Well,'' said Cato, undaunted, ''dat goes ter show sumpin' more horrible dan usual don' gone ter happen in dese yer parts!''

Both girls broke out into laughter.

''You are delicious, Cato,'' cried Anetje. ''If any spook can die in your hands, he would have to be a pretty weak spook. What happened to your disreputable old Grandad Tonius?''

''He don' fiddle 'till sunup, den he come home, hung up de fiddle, lay down an' war a dead nigger 'fore sundown!''

''When you get the fiddle,'' smiled Fem, ''I'll come to Jones' lane and hear you play.''

"What yo' t'ink I am?" Cato cried. "Dis chile ain't gwine to search roun' after de debble. If Satan don' cotch me, *he's* goin' ter do de chasin'. I tell you chillun, dese am raisin' times. Jes hear dat wind!" It howled dismally down the chimney.

"Things look queer," Cato went on in deep tones. "I'se been noticin' t'ings. Look at dat stun!" He pointed to the hearthstone. "It's reel teetery. I'se goin' ter look into de matter ter-morrow. You know's what I t'ink?"

"No," said both girls apprehensively.

"I t'ink de 'house-fairy' is a humpin' ob herself ter get out an' sabe us when de British come."

"Cato!" continued Fem, raising a warning finger, "if you meddle with that stone, I'll ask Father to sell you!"

"Lor'!" said Cato unawed by the threat. "No stun should be in dat state when de British come. Dey allas look fur treasure under de hearthstone fust t'ing. 'Cose, I know you uns don' hide de treasure, you can't fool me, but you wouldn't put it in *sech* a place! All same de

soldiers would rampage wid dat stun directly, an' tear up massa's house."

There was no choice: they must take Cato into their confidence. They did so humbly enough.

"Lawd!" he groaned. "You all better consult me 'bout sech t'ings. Jes t'ink how massa's money an' jewels has been 'sposed all dese days. Lawd!"

"Do you know a better place?" Anetje meekly questioned.

"Cose. But hurry an' raise dis stun!"

It was no great task, and there were three instead of two at it now. In ten minutes all the precious wealth was lying at their feet.

"Now we'se got ter git dis out ob de house, an' hide it in some careless place," explained Cato. "I know ob two fine places, but I guess we'll take it to de corn-crib."

"The corn-crib!"

"Yes. Lor', Miss Fem, an' I heard massa say he trusted you 'bout hidin' de treasure. Lawd! Come on. We'se got ter get ebberything done decent."

Anetje made a dive for the jewel-box, while

Cato and Femmetia took possession of the family silver. Out of the house they stole, and, keeping in the shadow until they reached the rear, they made their way to the corn-crib.

The snores of Cæsar, and the muttered imprecations of Juno bespoke safety from that quarter. If only the master and mistress did not return at once, all might go well. The crib was gained, then Fem dropped her bundle and whispered hoarsely:

"Are we to bury these things under the corn?"

For the second time that night a look of unutterable scorn passed over Cato's face.

" 'Cept I heard yo' myself, Miss Fem, I'd nebber believe yo' could ask *sech* a question." The girl drew back.

"Under de corn!" the withering voice went on. "Under de corn! What you t'ink, Miss Fem, after de King's men got froo feedin' dere hosses wid our corn, dey would find de treasure layin' right dere as a reward fur dere industry? Lor', Miss Fem, an' dis from you!"

Femmetia and Anetje swayed from side to side with laughter; but time was precious.

"Where, then, Cato? And please forgive us."

"Under de crib in de soft earth, but deep, deep, deep,—where de chickens scratch an' t'ings look homelike an' careless."

"Cato, you are a genius!" breathed Anetje, and they all fell to work.

In a half-hour the Stryker jewels and family plate were reposing under the crib, and not even a discerning hen would be suspicious. Then back to the house they went, and to work upon the dislodged stone. They were none too soon, for barely was it in place, when wheels were heard, and the master was calling for Cato.

"You needn't come wid me," he said. "Somehow I feel like I got new courage."

"It's self-respect," laughed Fem. "Some day, Cato, the family will thank you. That treasure will make our future happy. The loss of it would make us miserable."

CHAPTER III

POOR PETER

IT was a hot day in early summer, and Mr. and Mrs. Stryker, with Femmetia and Anetje, sat in the big living-room trying to keep cool.

Suddenly Mr. Stryker said: "Mother, I do wish that Cæsar would relay that hearthstone. It certainly looks as if it had been tampered with!"

It certainly did. Mrs. Stryker grew anxious at once, and the girls, remembering that she thought the treasure lay hidden under it, gave each other a fleeting glance and strolled to the window.

"I'll go and speak to Cæsar at once," said Mrs. Stryker; then as she passed the window she added: "There is a heavy shower coming up. Cæsar will have to look after the cattle."

"I wonder if his Satanic Majesty will skip the light fantastic down Jones' lane to-night?" laughingly whispered Fem.

"I should think in the face of *that* cloud you might suppress your jokes," Anetje replied. "It is going to be a perfectly awful shower."

There was a waiting listlessness in all about. The blue-black clouds drifted steadily toward them, moved by a wind no one could feel.

Mr. Stryker, absorbed in a newspaper, noticed nothing else. A neighbor had rowed to and from New York that morning, and had left the paper at the Stryker home as a rare treat which must be passed on to other homes as soon as possible. It was filled with the doings of Lord Howe's army, and was exciting reading.

"The rascal!" muttered the rebel behind the sheet. "But you can't get ahead of our General!"

Suddenly a distant roar of thunder startled them all, then an oncoming noise as if a great army were advancing.

"Lower the window, Fem!" cried Mrs. Stryker. "And Anetje, run to the rooms above. There is little time."

"Oh, look, Mother," said Fem, as she drew

down the glass," there is poor Peter sitting under the big oak!"

"Oh, call him, poor simple thing! He will be struck by lightning perhaps!"

"Peter! Peter!" shouted both girls at once, for Anetje had finished her task above-stairs with marvelous haste. "Oh, Peter, come into the kitchen!"

With awful force the shower broke, and before the poor idiot boy had reached the house he was drenched to the skin. The entire family greeted him, for he was public property. No one claimed him, but now and then a kindly-hearted housewife remembered that he must be clothed and fed.

"Peter," said Mrs. Stryker, drawing the ragged coat from the boy's thin shoulders, "why did you sit out there in such a dangerous storm?"

"To find who was my friend." The boy smiled vacantly, speaking in the broadest Dutch. Poor Peter, behind the expressionless stare, had eyes of rare beauty.

"Since morning," the slow voice ran on, "I

went from house to house hungry and tired. I sat in front of each door to see who was good enough to ask poor Peter in."

"But people are not unkind to you," Anetje broke in.

"If I ask, yes; but you are the first who *called* me in."

"You know we are your friends, poor child." Mrs. Stryker was wrapping a warm blanket about the trembling body.

"I *thought,* yes, now I know. I have a secret, but first give poor Peter food and drink."

Juno moved to obey Mrs. Stryker's command, but she did it grudgingly. She believed Peter to be hoodooed and wished with all her heart he would keep his distance and find his friends elsewhere.

Long did the storm last, and even after the thunder ceased, sullen clouds hung heavy.

"Peter must remain over night," Mr. Stryker commanded. "Have a bed made for him in the loft, Mother."

Poor Peter flashed a grateful look around the group, but went silently on with his meal. This

hospitality was quite to his liking. Living as he did, upon public charity, it was a delightful experience to be a guest in so goodly a house. All things must come to an end, and even Peter's appetite had its limits, and he was led away by Cato to his loft-bed, and the family sat down to a long-delayed supper. Later in the evening Cato waylaid Femmetia on the back porch and surprised her by these terrifying words.

"Lor', Miss Fem, I jes *now* understand dat por' fool thing up-stairs! No wonder he ain't got no wits for de presint; dat chile kin look inter de future. He *sees things what is hidden,* an' he knows what is goin' ter happen, sho' as I stan' here! When I took him up to dat loft he don' stun me by askin' awful 'sterious, 'What you done wid de glitters an' de shiny table things? Fur de debbils are after dem!' Dat's what dat fool chile say, an' I nearly drapped on de flo'. Can yo' read de riddle, Miss Fem? 'Glitter' means de jewels fur sartin, an' I reckon any one knows what de res' meant."

Femmetia reeled against the house. Here was a calamity, indeed. Long ago Anetje had

begged permission to open the jewel-box and clean the precious gems, and while so employed poor Peter had taken her unawares, but, depending upon his lack of wit, she had foolishly displayed the brilliant treasures to the child, and he had remembered.

Since leaving the old Fatherland, Grandmother Stryker and her descendants had kept from the eyes of the curious, this little fortune which was to mean so much to the two girls by and by. The plain, hard-working life in the new home and country was no place for the display of anything so rare. But here, just when the English might descend upon them at any moment, poor Peter had in his empty brain the power to ruin them! Perhaps he had already told some one evilly inclined. To be sure the treasure was hidden, but with a positive knowledge that it was on the place, a determined thief would surely find it.

"Cato!" the girl whispered, "leave Peter to me. I'll frighten him into forgetting to ask that question again. It has to be done. You cannot reason with him. I'll just have to awe him."

Thus determined, after evening prayers, Femmetia crept up the attic stairs, and into the tiny loft. The storm had ceased, and the moonlight, streaming into the one little window, spread a clear light upon poor Peter asleep on his rough bed.

The vacant look seemed gone from the boyish face, for in sleep he was fair and good to look upon. Femmetia was wondrously tender toward all things weak and small. She hesitated now to awaken the sleeper, and by pure force of will subdue his weaker mind; but every moment was precious, Anetje might come in search of her any moment, and Anetje would be in the way.

"Peter!" The boy stirred, and muttered something.

"Peter! Wake up—it is school-time!" This was simply fiendish on Fem's part, for the villagers knew that no more awful thing had ever come to poor Peter than the determined attacks the village schoolmaster made to educate him.

"I go *not* to school!" whimpered the boy, sitting up wide awake at once.

"Why not?" Fem said, solemnly eyeing him.

"I believe you have been playing truant for days!"

"Schoolmaster Van Zandt he whip me because the coin he found on me always." The poor, simple fellow was crying softly.

"The coin?" Fem was puzzled.

"He gave the coin to the best boy," Peter rambled on, "and then when another boy speaks Dutch, the best boy gives the coin to him, and he to another. Poor Peter speaks the Dutch always. It is the only thing that will stay; so the coin is always with Peter at the last, and he gets the whippings and at close of day the coin is taken away to be ready for the next day, and more Dutch and more beatings!"

"Oh, poor Peter!" Sorry as she was, Femmetia could not refrain from laughing.

Schoolmaster Van Zandt had been specially engaged to teach the youngsters English, and English he would teach though he killed every pupil in the school. He had been the tyrant of Fem's early years and his ingenuity in devising punishment for the scholars whose tongues clung to the mother Dutch made rich material

for the mirth of the older ones who were out of his clutches.

"Ah! Peter, a terrific beating awaits you," Fem whispered. "You ran away to-day!"

"Poor, poor Peter!" wailed the boy, covering his face.

Fem drew his hands down. "Peter, I can save you the whipping, only you must tell me *who* knows about the glitters and the sparkles!"

A keen, still look spread over the boy's face. "Peter knows," he answered.

"Who have you told?"

"Peter speaks Dutch."

"Did you hear some one else speak about the sparkles?"

A look of fear crept over the vacant face upon the pillow. "'Sh!" he said, then drew Fem closer. "Peter heard one who wears the dress of a friend tell the foe that down here is something to come for. I saw the foe wrap his cape over his face and go back toward the English line. Poor Peter is everywhere, and he listens much, but,"—and here the simple face glowed, —"Peter only speaks Dutch!"

"I understand." Femmetia shivered in the moonlight. How near and terrible the danger seemed!

"'Sh!" Peter had raised himself and was clinging to Fem. "I was on the western hill. I saw our men backing up, and backing up, and hiding under bushes; and Peter he hide, too; but there is something *bad* coming."

"Peter, are you *sure* you saw that? Are you dreaming? I wonder," here Fem's pretty eyes grew wide with fear, "I wonder if Lord Cornwallis is coming nearer? Peter, remember you do not know *anything* about the glitters. Promise! They are well hidden, they are all we have in the world; even if the English kill you, don't you remember *one* thing!"

"Peter speaks only the Dutch." The simple smile returned. Peter had forgotten the promised whipping; forgotten the foe and the glitter; he was tired and utterly worn with his day's tramp, and even as Fem watched him he fell into a deep slumber.

Then softly, with a sure feeling of coming evil making heavy her heart, Fem crept down-stairs

and into Anetje's bedroom. Barely had she entered when a sudden roar and distant rumble shook the summer silence.

"Anetje!" groaned she. "Oh, Netje, that is not thunder!" Anetje sat up in bed white and haggard. "No, it is a gun!" she moaned; "oh, what shall we do?"

Another and another broke the trembling stillness. A memory of the hiding men pressing ever back upon the village came to Femmetia. There was so little, little time, and so few to help!

"Poor Father," sobbed Anetje. "This will kill him. Oh, the wicked, wicked English! Fem, do you suppose they will murder us outright, or just put us in chains and drag us on their dreadful ships?"

"Maybe they'll do worse." Fem's voice was grim. "But just now, Netje, we've got to think of Father and Mother."

"Girls!" Mr. Stryker stood in the doorway, his tall, gaunt form rigid and still. "Those are guns, and the foe is not far. How it will turn out we cannot tell, but you have good blood in

you, and I do not think you will be cowardly whatever happens. I have planned to go, at the first alarm, to Uncle Jacobus'; we must combine forces. We will pack up what we can carry in wagons; Cæsar and Cato are getting ready. In another hour we will start and be well sheltered before daylight. Girls," he paused, "can I trust you that the treasure is well hidden? It is all that we will have when the dark days come by and by. The foe will think we carry it with us. If you have done your work well, it will be safer here with us away. Think while there is time."

Anetje ran up to her father and clung sobbingly to him. "The treasure is safely hidden, isn't it, Fem? But, oh, Father, must we go from the dear home?"

Mr. Stryker's face quivered. "It is best," he said. "I am but a weak man. Think of Mother, girls, and do your share."

There was little weeping after that; every one flew about by candle-light, gathering together all that could be well carried in the big cart. Then, sadly and like ghosts of a once happy

time, the family, the three servants, and poor Peter, who was but half awake, turned their faces from the loved home, leaving it locked, but at the mercy of the foe, who, before another day dawned and set, would be within the pretty village.

As the mournful little cavalcade moved on through the early dusk of that summer day they heard afar the booming of the guns. Had Washington left them to their fate? Or would he yet, in time to save their homes, drive the cruel English away from the shores?

Uncle Jacobus' family were astir and ready for the addition to their household. It had long been an understood thing that they should join forces did danger threaten, and danger now was near.

"Femmetia," said her father as they drew into Uncle Jacobus' gates, "I hope you did not forget the Bible?"

"It is safe in the package Mother is sitting upon, Father."

"Good, Fem. And, my girl," the voice grew husky, "I may not live to go back to the old

home. I loved it next best to the Fatherland. I'd rather the English burned it than that alien feet should wander in to stay. In the china-closet in the living-room is a secret spring; touch it and you will find a door opening into a passage to the roof. It's the only thing about the house you girls did not know. Should you ever go back, and did sudden danger threaten, it is a good hiding-place. My will is there. If we all go back it is well; if the house is burned no one will know. I am sorry I forgot it, but it does not greatly matter."

"But, Father," the girl said, "shall I go back? I could find the spring, no one will ever know, and there may be time."

"Do not think of such a thing, Fem. It is safe, unless *all* is lost. Mother and you girls are all I have in any case. But I wanted you to know."

From that moment two places at the old home haunted Femmetia's days; the corn-crib and the secret passage of which she had never known before.

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING THE NEWS IN JONES' LANE

AFTER that night of firing, a silent morning dawned. Femmetia was almost sorry they had left home so soon. Still there was a certain pleasure to be gotten among the big family at Uncle Jacobus', and the knowledge of near danger and present safety flavored the day with a spicy charm.

"Anetje," questioned Femmetia, as she and her sister sat upon the doorstep in the sun, "do you suppose we have an enemy in Midtown?" Poor Peter's words in the loft about a man in the clothing of a friend telling the foe of the treasure had made an impression upon the girl. The foolish lad had apparently forgotten the scene of the night before, but it grew clearer to Fem as the time passed.

"An enemy?" mused Anetje. She was very pale, but as she spoke a gleam of fun crossed her pretty face.

"It would seem like a big name to call Hans Brinckman, but he called himself that."

"Netje," Fem grew tragic, "it is far from me to wish to dangle your skeleton before your eyes, and I don't care a jot for your secrets; but *why* did Hans Brinckman call himself an enemy."

Anetje's face flushed under the stern, straight glance.

"Because I would not marry him."

"He asked you?"

"Of course, else how would he have known I would not? He asked me about a hundred times."

"How did you make him stop asking?"

"I told him I was not for the like of him."

"That was pleasant. Go on. What else did you tell him."

"I told him—I told him that while we were poor now—I meant *never* to marry any one but a man—who—who—was rich enough to make it possible for me to wear—to wear the jewels! I was sick and tired of him and I wanted him to

know that I was not the sort of girl for *him.*" There was a pause, then—

"Anetje, you are a great fool!"

Anetje gave a gasp and sank back before the angry face of her sister.

"You seem always to forget that half those jewels Grandmother left to *me.* If you haven't clean given the entire lot away, it isn't *your* fault." sighed Fem.

"Femmetia!"

"Yes, I mean it. First you show them to poor Peter and dazzle his wandering fancy."

"Peter is a fool," whined Anetje.

"Then you boast of them to Hans Brinckman."

"But Hans, too, is a fool." Anetje was crying now.

"So there is the family treasure at the mercy of three fools!" Fem was quivering indignantly. "Of course, Hans being the fool he is, will think you will be glad enough to marry him if the treasure was well out of the way, and how can one depend upon poor Peter?"

"They are not thieves," sobbed Anetje.

"I only wish they were," snapped Fem. "Against a thief you can do battle, but fools! Bah! Now look here, Netje. In the future Cato and I are going to manage the treasure. If we save it, well and good, you shall have your share, but you must ask no questions and you must not expect confidences, for you will not get them!"

"Fem Stryker, you look just like Grandmother!" This was always a telling stroke on Femmetia, for Grandmother Stryker had been notorious for her lack of beauty.

"Well, I wish you had her sense," Fem weakly rejoined, and then she strolled away to ponder upon what effect Hans' information,—for she never doubted but that Peter had seen Hans with an Englishman,—would have upon the future of the treasure.

The long day dragged on. Not a word of news came to the isolated farmhouse. All the able-bodied men were off and away to that uncertain place from which the sound of firing had come the night before.

"The suspense is awful!" said Mr. Stryker.

"It's just like that stillness before the storm,"

sighed Fem. "Oh! how long ago that seems! I wish I were a boy, Father, I'd go to the tavern. News always drifts there. But dearie me! I am only a girl."

Mr. Stryker smiled feebly. "You'd be a fine lad, Fem," said he. "Many a time I have wished it for your sake, as well as my own. A family needs one boy."

"Well, I'll act as much like one as possible." Fem wound her arms about her father. "In these times, petticoats don't count; it's hearts; Father, good, fearless hearts."

"That's so, girl! That's so!"

It was just after dark of that same day that Fem, from her seat in an upper window, heard a low, peculiar whistle. It was the signal upon which she and Cato had decided when, earlier in the day, she had confided to him that he alone must stand by her in defense of the family wealth. She slipped from the window-ledge and hurried to her assistant.

"Miss Fem!" The quiver in Cato's voice from out the gloom was thrilling. "Miss Fem! I jest can't bide dis 'spense any longer. I'se

got ter find out 'bout de doin's ob de King's rascals. If you could hear de sort of t'ings my ole gran'mammy done sayin' to de odders I reckon you die fur sho'. What you think she sayin' now? Dat de reason ob dis stillness ter day is kase de redcoats am a-eatin' all dat dey shot las' night!''

Femmetia's blood chilled as she digested this fearsome idea.

''What you going to do about it?'' she queried.

''I'se a-goin' ter take de lantern, Miss Fem, an' I'se goin' ter do some creepin'. I'se goin' ter fin' t'ings out! If yo' kin creep low enough an' long enough yo' allus kin fin' t'ings out.''

''Do you dare?'' faltered the girl. ''You see, Cato, some Britisher may be creeping to find things out.''

''I kin creep lower dan any Britisher. I don' learn my trick from a Canarsie Injin.''

''Cato.'' Fem came close. ''Cato, I'm going with you! I learned to creep by watching a Canarsie squaw; old Betty, you know.''

"Miss Fem," and Cato's eyes gleamed in the darkness, "I des 'sposed you would come!"

An hour later, armed with an old lantern, Cato and Femmetia stole from the safety of Uncle Jacobus' home, and started down the lane. Little they knew how much of an adventure they were to have before they again saw the familiar scene.

"Does yo' ebber t'ink, Miss Fem," said Cato in a hoarse undertone, when once the house was out of sight, "what de trees whisper to each odder all night long?"

"No." Fem's voice was barely heard.

"Why dey whisper ob what dey see all day; frum dere high look out dey see heaps."

"I suppose they do."

"If we could only understan' dere speech," Cato went on, "I dare say dey could lean down an' tell us whar de King's men are an' what dey are a-doin' dis berry minit. It's terrible fortunate to be tall enough to see above ebbery-t'ing."

"But you'd be a plain target, Cato."

"Dat's so, Miss Fem, dat's so. Say, Miss Fem, if yo' nerves are sharp set, it ain't a thunderin' ter-night, we might go along Jones' lane to Stunraap; it would save lots of time. I hear dat dere are some doin's down at Stunraap, an' 'sides, frum de top of Debbil's Rock on de lane, we kin look a consid'able distance."

"I didn't come out to act the coward!" Fem rejoined valiantly. "Lead on, Cato; thunder or no thunder, Jones' lane it is!"

So stumbling, and laughing silently, the pair of adventurers ran on. They reached the rock at last, made memorable by Cato's musical grandad, and from its height they paused to take breath. Afar, over the stretch of country which lay between them and the Bay, lights were burning here and there, and the shadow of deep woods made them more noticeable.

"I 'clar!" breathed Cato, "dose look like brush-heap fires!" Then after a pause, "Hark!"

"What a strange sound," gasped Femmetia. It was like the breathing of many people and cattle, too. Then came a nearer sound, as if

two or three had detached themselves from the mass and were hurrying on.

"Horses!" murmured Cato. "Lay down, Miss Fem!"

Fortunately the weeds were high by the roadside. The two slipped from the rock, and lay close to the ground.

"If they miss us at Uncle Jacobus' how frightened they will be," sighed Fem, realizing for the first time that an adventure had two sides.

"'Sh!" comforted Cato. Almost before one could realize it, the advancing horsemen were within sight.

"The place is full of ghost-stories and nursery jingles," said a thick English voice speaking loudly from the dark. "Since we have driven the Dutchmen before us and cornered them in their lair they have done nothing but entertain us with their rustic babble."

"The tales are—are all true my—my lord!"

That voice made Femmetia and Cato start. It was the voice of Hans Brinckman and no other!

He had evidently been drinking, as had also

his noble companion, for he sat unsteadily upon his horse, and his tone was a whine.

"I wouldn't like to see the thief-lights tonight, my—my lord." The terms of royalty fell cringingly and adoringly from Hans' Dutch tongue.

The Britisher laughed loudly. "Let me see," he said. "This wonderful light is supposed to follow beside a thief, is it not? Always keeping abreast the poor devil, and drawing attention to him until he is brought to justice. Am I right?"

"Yes; ye-es, your lordship."

"Well, I'd find a way to extinguish the light, I swear," the man roared. "Now see here, Brinckman." The two stopped almost in front of the rock. "You need go no further. An honest fellow like you ought to run no chances. Point out the house from here."

"There!" Hans rose swayingly in his stirrups and pointed off to where—not a mile distant—the old Stryker house stood deserted and undefended in the gloom.

"And you still swear to the treasure, or are you too drunk?"

"My lord—she—she told me herself, and the silver I saw on the table once when the pastor and I were there to tea."

"And the family is away? How do you know the treasure is still there? Most likely they would cart it with them."

"The house is empty your—your majesty—" Hans was getting muddled, "I went to-day to find out. I broke in the kitchen window, your—your highness will find it open. I think—" his voice grew thick—"the treasure is under the hearthstone! The place was newly fixed as I can swear."

"All right, my good fellow. Here is a pound as a promise of more when the game is mine. With money in your pocket you may get the girl in the end. Heaven knows these Dutchmen will have little enough when we get through with them. If all you say is true, and I get the jewels, fifty pound more is yours. But if you say one word either in Dutch or bad English about this affair it will be your last."

Hans dissolved in maudlin tears at this. He gripped the money, tried to kiss the outstretched

hand, and failing to do so, turned and galloped off into the night.

During this conversation, Cato had been busily engaged with something close beside him. Once Hans had departed from the scene, the lonely horseman in the road went leisurely forward in the opposite direction. Then Cato arose, and in a husky whisper commanded:

"Miss Fem, you follow de bes' yo' can. I'se goin' to scare dat Britisher inter forty leben fits!"

Femmetia prepared to obey, and Cato, keeping as close to the ground as possible, glided among the bushes by the road edge. Then Femmetia saw what he had been doing. The lantern was fastened to a long, supple stick, it was now lighted, and, held aloft on the swaying sapling, it bobbed to and fro almost on a level with the horseman. Even in that moment of anxiety Femmetia shook with laughter at the ready wit of her dusky friend. But what would be the effect upon the King's man? He might turn and kill the two eavesdroppers; indeed, it would probably be his only thought, and there,

When the British Came.

"HE STRUCK AT THE LIGHT WITH HIS RIDING WHIP."

by the haunted stone, they would be found, no one knowing how or why they had come.

But the Britisher, lost in meditation, cantered on. Presently he raised his head. A low exclamation broke from him, then a feeble laugh. He struck at the light with his riding-whip, but the slight willow stick merely swayed under the touch of the whip. Then he began to strike out wildly, but he was too tipsy and excited to aim well, and the mysterious light bobbed on.

"Gad!" muttered the fellow, "their silly gabble has got into my blood." Then he reached forward and belabored space again. Suddenly, with a muttered curse, he turned his horse, almost trampling Cato, and rushed into the direction that his partner in guilt had recently taken.

"Come!" whispered Cato when the flying hoof-beats died away. "Come, Miss Fem, let's make for de ole home. Dat villain is goin' ter fetch company, an' if dey doan't fin' de treasure, dey will burn de house. Les' try an' sabe de house!"

Without a word more the two took to the road and ran like deer toward the old familiar home.

How lonely and forsaken it looked! Thanks to Hans, they entered the kitchen window and stood in the low, broad room.

"Seems like some one was dead," muttered Cato.

"All the sweet old days are dead, Cato," whispered the girl, wiping the tears from her eyes. "Now that we are here what are we to do?"

"Hide in de corn-crib, Miss Fem. We'll fight ober de treasure if we has ter fight, an' we'll watch, safe out ob de way, while dey hunt inside." While he spoke Cato's eyes were roving about the kitchen.

"Miss Fem, does yo' happen ter know whedder yo' pa's took his ole gun along?"

"Why, no, Cato. It is up in his bedroom, ramrod, powder-horn, and all. I heard him tell Uncle Jacobus he had forgotten that one."

"Thank de Lawd!" said Cato, and darted up the stairs.

"If we *only* had another!" groaned Fem,

when Cato returned with the treasure. "What can I use?" Her eye caught the broom behind the door. "A broom's no mean weapon in a brave Dutch woman's hand. Now, Cato, for the corn-crib! Let the entire British army come, we are ready. Oh! if I only could have a whack at King George's nose!"

Cato chuckled wildly. Surely being a girl did not unfit Femmetia Stryker from doing her share in saving the dear old home!

Once within the crib the valiant warriors sat down upon a couple of old baskets and wiped the perspiration from their worthy brows. Then Cato fell to work upon his gun, seeing to it that all should be ready in case of an attack. Femmetia clutched her broom and thought upon many things. Not the least was the thought of the day of reckoning, when—if she and Cato came out of this adventure alive—they would have to face the stern Dutch parents.

" 'Sh!" Cato, drilled in nature's school, was keen of hearing. Then on, on came the sound of galloping horses. Well they knew, these advancing foemen, that they had little to fear from

the scared villagers. In all probability every Dutch head was under bedclothes at the sound.

"Dat thief done bring more rascals," breathed Cato. "De thief-light don' scare him fur sho'!"

The boy was right, for soon his lordship came in sight, with several companions to keep up his noble courage.

"Now, Langly," said the young officer as the band halted near the crib, "drunk as the fellow was, I believe him about the treasure. He mentioned the hearthstone, but I can hardly believe any fool would choose such a place of concealment,"—Cato wickedly nudged Femmetia, and the girl winced in the darkness,—"but let us look there as a beginning. We'll ransack the house, and if we do not find it we'll burn the ancestral halls, and have *that* satisfaction. My Lord Cornwallis will take possession to-morrow. The pasturage is good, and I say what *we* do not find, no one else shall have the pleasure of finding. Come on!"

The party went indoors, all but one—he whom they called Langly remained behind. The leader noticed this and came back.

"What's up?" he questioned sharply.

"Simply this, my lord. I did not understand until this moment what the manner of our errand was. I have obeyed my officer's command in following, but I refuse to be party to such an outrage as you have planned. If I am overstepping my rights, I am prepared to appear before my Lord Cornwallis to-morrow!"

"Curse you!" muttered the young officer. "And what if I order you to follow me now?"

"I shall refuse, my lord!"

"This is all fair play. If we do not plunder some one else will."

There was silence. Then young Lord Thorndyke spoke again.

"You refuse to go in?"

"I do, my lord."

"Then stand guard here, and to-morrow forget what you have seen and heard. It will be better for you."

"I learned my soldiering in a hard school, my lord. You may trust me as a sentinel."

Thorndyke turned, muttered something, and passed again into the house, while young

Langly, with bent head, paced to and fro. Presently the house-party returned from their unsuccessful search. They were raging at their ill luck in no measured terms.

"It *has* been there," said one. "I'll take my oath to that."

"Well, that doesn't help us," another replied.

"It does to this extent. It shows that some one has removed it recently. If the family has not taken it with them, it may have been that Dutch fellow, who has returned and helped himself."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Thorndyke. "If he has he will not enjoy it long."

"There is just another possibility," broke in a third. "Some of the family may have secreted it outside the house. Knowing they would not be here to defend it, and thinking we would conclude they had taken it with them, they may have been just smart enough to have hidden it in some outhouse."

Femmetia and Cato breathed deep and hard.

"My Lord Cornwallis drives his horses this

way to-morrow. To-night is our only chance. Hunt thoroughly for a couple of hours and then —burn the pile and get back to camp!"

Young Lord Thorndyke spoke hastily and led straight for the doors of the corn-crib. At first the two thought they would be discovered at once, but as good luck would have it, the party went past and made for the stable, whose doors were directly opposite the crib. Cæsar had fastened securely the great doors, and the searchers united their strength to force them open. Standing so in a mass the two in the corn-crib could see them easily, and Femmetia knew, by the stirring near her, that Cato was aiming from between the slats. Then from out the gloom and stillness the old weapon spoke true, and the bullet found an immediate resting-place in some part of the anatomy of one of King George's army.

"My God!" shouted a wild voice, and the brave comrades scattered as if a bomb had exploded in their midst.

"It's—it's Captain Thorndyke!" cried one. "My lord, where are you hit?"

"My arm," groaned the leader. "Here, Arnold, lend me a hand."

But the group was panic-stricken. One shot would certainly call forth others. No one was safe, and they did not know in what direction to aim their own weapons, for they had been so surprised in the attack.

"They are behind that corn-crib!" gasped Thorndyke. "Here, you idiots, will a couple of you help me to the house. I'll bleed to death here."

While two helped the wounded leader to shelter; the others, led by Langly, ran toward the corn-crib, aiming their guns as they came, hoping to gain the protection of the near side of the building before another shot was fired. One very portly person presented himself first, and crouching with his back to the crib, chattered with fear. This unlooked-for attack had unnerved him. Cato was reloading, but Femmetia saw her chance. With swift, silent force she plunged her weapon between the slats and with all the fervor of her repressed feelings, she prodded the fleshy Englishman in his broad back.

He fell like a log and groaned out, "I'm done for! Bayoneted, by Gad! Boys, they are inside, hundreds of them! Do not leave me to die!" He was whimpering like a baby. "Here, Langly,—help! help! Get to horse, this is a dangerous place! Make for camp! Rouse His Majesty's army!"

Langly was the only steady one of the party. The terror spread. A mad rush was made for the house. Thorndyke was borne from indoors and laid like a sack of meal across his charger, and thus they ignominiously departed to the clatter of an occasional bullet, which Cato sent after them.

"I suppose," groaned Fem after a long, long pause, "I suppose we have had an adventure."

"I spec' we has," Cato admitted. "Les' get home!"

CHAPTER V

IN THE SECRET PASSAGE

"FEMMETIA! Femmetia! How the child sleeps!" Mrs. Stryker shook the slumberer until the feather bed rose around the girlish body as it was pressed down and then pulled up. "Oh! Femmetia, there is a battle!"

"I know it," drowsily, "but Cato and I finished them before we left."

"Femmetia, you are dreaming, while just beyond the entrenchment our men are dying. Hear that!"

Fem sat up, wide awake at once, for the awful roar of cannon had succeeded where the mother had failed.

All thoughts of the previous night's adventure were forgotten, and if any one noticed a peculiarity in the appearance of Femmetia Stryker and the slave boy Cato, it was never mentioned. Fem never came before the seats of justice for that lark. All was engulfed in the terrible

reality of that summer day. Just beyond the entrenchments that had been thrown up on the outskirts of the village, a battle was raging! Two of Uncle Jacobus' boys had gone before daybreak in answer to a hurried call, and the house was in great fear.

"Dress, Fem, as quickly as you can," pleaded her mother. "You look fearfully worn, child. Your father has gone to the hill, back of the house. You can see the smoke quite clearly from there. Oh! it is terrible, terrible!"

While her mother was speaking, Femmetia was getting into her clothes, and in fifteen minutes she was on the hilltop beside her father. Very wan he looked, and his eyes blazed feverishly.

"Over there," he pointed, "our friends are fighting for us, while I, and a lot of slaves and women stay to watch. Oh! it is cruel that weakness holds my hand!"

"Father!" Fem coaxed, "some one must stay to defend the women, you know. Our turn will come. Oh, Father!" The girl put her hands

over her ears, for the volley from beyond the western hills shook the air.

"The smoke is in line with our home, Fem. It is terribly near. How goes the day? Oh! but for news of our army's doings!" As if in answer to the sick man's longing, a slow, dragging figure came in sight down the lane leading from the main road. Father and daughter, from their hilltop, gazed speechless. Could it be —yes, it *was* Uncle Jacobus' son Gerret! Before daylight he had gone forth eager and full of life, his gun slung over his shoulder, and his face set toward the foe, and there in the woods, where, as a boy, he had played with his comrades, he had fought his battle, received his wound, and had crept away, childishly longing for home!

As soon as Femmetia was sure the man was her cousin, she ran down the hill, followed more slowly by her father.

"Gerret!" she cried, clinging to the boyish hand, and gazing with horror at the blood-stained shirt which was hanging in tatters about him. "Lean on me, Gerret. Oh, let me help you home."

"Little Fem," the voice sounded strange and distant. "I will rest here a moment. I'm so tired. Uncle John, is that you?" Mr. Stryker bent over the boy pityingly. "I have brought the news! Bend close and listen."

Femmetia and her father pressed nearer, Fem holding the tired head, and Mr. Stryker the limp hand. And so they waited for the news.

"General Sullivan—did—his best! He led us straight at the British and we broke through their lines. Hurrah!" Poor Gerret tried to rise, but Fem held him back.

"The Hessians fought, and we fought, and we held our ground. All would have been well had that been the only battle—but—but—there was another battle on the left—and—and—on our rear. I heard some one say—that General Washington's orders had been disobeyed—the passes had been left undefended and—and we were beset on every side. We fought as long as we could—General Washington will understand—but if they had *only* obeyed him! All was lost—the dead lie thick where the flowers used to grow—and I—came home!" A strange pallor

spread over the boyish face, and a terrible fear grew in Femmetia's heart.

"Father," she whispered, "is—is—*this* death?"

The man nodded, while the tears dropped from his eyes. "Indeed, I fear so!" he said.

"He shall not die here, then! Aunt Gertia shall have a chance to save him! Here, Father, take his feet, I'm going to get him to the house!"

Mr. Stryker put all his feeble strength to the task, and Fem, with a power born of fear and determination, took the shoulders of her young cousin in her arms, and so they started across the meadow lying between the hill and the house. Old Juno saw them from the kitchen door, and sounding the alarm, rushed out to lend her aid. The household was ready when the young hero was borne across the threshold. In those days women did not faint at such scenes, or make much ado; they went skillfully to work to heal the sick, if it were God's will, or, failing that, make easy the parting for the one who had given his life for the country he loved.

All that day Aunt Gertia and her willing helpers worked over young Gerret, and that night, while General Washington made his masterly retreat from Brooklyn Heights in the fog and darkness, Gerret fought another battle with a dread enemy, and *this* time he won, and slowly came back from the conflict, weak and wan, just as the summer morning broke.

"Thank God!" murmured Aunt Gertia, and then composedly: "Aunt Dinah, prepare a big breakfast, the family will be needing it, and feed all who pass this way!"

For a few days longer the Strykers remained at Uncle Jacobus'. News, less tragically brought than poor Gerret had brought it, drifted to the farmhouse. The defeat was hard to bear, but Uncle Jacobus' second son, John, found a way, after the battle, to escape from his captors, and, on his way to New York to rejoin Washington's shattered army, stopped to tell the family of his purpose and urged them to keep faithful to the cause.

"Save what money you can," he pleaded. "Give of your best treasure to any messenger

who comes in our General's name, for right will conquer in the end."

The great, stalwart fellow cried like a baby over his wounded brother, but when Gerret whispered feebly: "I'll—join—you—later—old man—keep a lookout for me!" the older patriot waved his hat aloft, and left the house with a braver heart.

All was changed in the quaint hamlet. The battle had laid waste many homes, and the bountiful crops had either been destroyed or were held as provision for the conquerors. The Forty-second Highland Regiment remained to make miserable the poor Dutch farmers and fill with fear the minds of the women and children.

"Let us go back to our home," said Mr. Stryker one day. "Too long have we been a burden. Each one must take up his own share." So with sad hearts the little family got into the big wagon, and with Cæsar, Cato, and poor Peter following, and driving the cattle they had taken with them, they turned their faces toward the home they had hardly dared hope would be left standing.

Whether it was the reputation gained for the place by Femmetia's and Cato's noble defense, or whether it merely happened so, none could tell, but, except for a certain amount of damage done by a shell, the house stood as they had left it. One wing was rather badly shattered; the ceiling of the "best parlor" was down, and one could look right up between the beams into the room above. This room was Fem's and Anetje's bedroom.

The family, with a courage born of the times, tried to see only the cheerful aspect of the case.

"The living-room and kitchen are all right," said Mr. Stryker, as they drew near, and Femmetia knew that he was thinking of the will in the secret passage.

"De corn-crib am standin'!" shouted Cato from the rear, and he mentally vowed to examine *under* it at the first opportunity. "We-uns bes' eat de corn long wid de cattle to keep it frum de British."

Once within doors the girls ran upstairs, and Anetje stood aghast as she beheld the open

flooring over which they must pass to reach the big four-poster.

"I'll fall and break my neck," wailed she.

"It's a pretty neck, but you'd be well out of your troubles," Fem comforted. "Now *I* rather like it, Netje. See, one, two, three! Hop, skip, and a jump! Here am I!" And sure enough there she was in the middle of the feather bed! "Besides you can look through and see what's going on downstairs."

"You don't *want* to see what's going on in the best parlor. Nothing but funerals and the pastor calling!"

In that Anetje was about right. The parlor was kept for the stern realities of life, lively action was reserved for kitchen and living-room.

Just then a cry of alarm and fear arose from below, and, forgetting their own interests, the girls ran downstairs. In the middle of the living-room stood Mr. and Mrs. Stryker. Their faces were white and set, and Mrs. Stryker was pointing dumbly at the upturned hearthstone, where, after their search, Captain Thorndyke and his men had left it.

"Gone!" groaned Mr. Stryker. "All, all gone! I have lived with this hope in my heart that it might be in my power to help those less fortunate." His wife in her fear had told him.

For a moment Femmetia thought to tell all, but *was* the treasure safe? She must not raise a false hope until she knew. She shook her head at Anetje and hastily said: "Never mind, Father. We will all help and we yet may be able to do as you wish."

Mr. Stryker sighed, and his poor wife broke down utterly.

Femmetia ran out to consult with Cato, and arrange, after midnight, to examine the treasure-place under the crib, but Anetje, full of personal fear as well as a deep sympathy for her parents, sought a corner behind the wood-shed and indulged in a hearty cry. There poor Peter found her; his face was radiant and his eyes full of a light that seemed gradually brightening since the exciting times had stirred his sluggish nature.

"No school!" he laughed gleefully. "Peter has been to see. School-house full of sick men.

Now Peter speak Dutch all the time and no beatings!'' Then, noticing Anetje's tears, he whimpered, ''Feel bad?''

''Oh! dreadfully,'' sobbed the girl, little heeding who the comforter was, and forgetting discretion. ''Oh, Peter, everything is so altered, and we have nothing, nothing unless the British have left us the treasure!''

The boy's puzzled face slowly cleared.

''The shiny things?'' he questioned.

''Yes.'' Then with a sudden inspiration: ''Oh, Peter, will you help me do something?''

He was all eagerness.

''Then listen. Right after supper—see, it is already growing dark—come out to the corncrib. I will tell you how you may help me.'' Peter nodded gleefully.

''They may think I am foolish,'' thought the girl, ''but I'm going to know about those jewels, and Fem would never tell me.'' And so just after the gloaming had set in Anetje and her docile assistant met at the back of the crib.

"Peter, can you dig quickly and deeply?" A broad smile wreathed Peter's face. What could he not turn his hand to—under guidance?

Anetje crouched down and began the operation, and the boy did as she did. Silently they worked, breathing quick and hard. Soon—oh, happiness! they came to the bag of silver and the brass-bound box! The girl almost sobbed with delight. She bent over the treasure and kissed it for pure joy. Peter looked on, puzzled, but happy. But now that she knew the treasure was safe, Anetje also knew she must again hide it. With the terrifying foe in command, walking in and out unannounced and prying, it was more important than ever that the jewels and silver should be guarded.

"I never can put them back!" thought Anetje, "and besides if Fem comes, as she surely will, she will scold dreadfully. A fool am I, Miss Fem? Well, we will see if I cannot outwit you, my good sister!" Aloud she said, "Peter, we must find a new place!"

Now, perhaps, Anetje's asking the boy if he could dig, had set his dull mind to reviewing his

other accomplishments, for he said, "Peter can dig, and Peter can climb chimneys!"

Anetje gazed up toward the house. From the kitchen chimney smoke was rising; the others were safe for the present. The one in the parlor was rarely used. Anetje remembered that early in the summer her father had ordered Cæsar to board it up just above the opening in the room to keep out the soot and swallows. A sudden determination seized her.

"Help, Peter," she whispered. "Help me drag these to the roof, you and I will find a new place, and never, never tell."

Tugging and stumbling, the two staggered on with their loads. A ladder against the kitchen enabled them to reach that roof, and the roof over the main part of the house sloped just enough to permit of them gaining a foothold there. Creeping along and dragging the loads, they reached, what Anetje supposed to be, the parlor chimney.

"Peter," she whispered, "do you think you could climb down? I will give you a bright shilling! Try to find a place and I will lower

these to you. Oh, Peter, if you do this I will give you *anything* you want. Do it and never tell."

"Peter speaks only the Dutch," nodded the boy. Then he began to descend, slowly, cautiously, as when in the old days he did it to clean chimneys and earn a meal. It was a wonderful chimney, the easiest one the boy had even seen. Perfectly clean, as if never used, and, conveniently placed up the sides, rough bits of wood making safe steps for the climber. Peter grinned with delight. His descent was quickly made, and there at the bottom he felt a shelf, a good place for the treasure! Quickly he remounted, motioned Anetje to hand him the bundle and box, and, after a struggle and a longer period of time than his other descent had taken, he deposited the treasure on the shelf of the strange chimney, and then scampered up, full of pride at his achievement.

No one of the family or servants had missed the pair of mischiefmakers. All were too busy trying to get the old home into shape. Anetje went early to bed, crawling over the beams with

a courage gained by her evening work—and then at midnight Cato and Femmetia sallied forth to make sure that the treasure was still in its hiding-place. They took no light, they must rely on their sense of touch. It was very dark, and so, upon hands and knees, they crawled under the crib, making their way through a pile of rubbish which had been hastily thrown there when Cæsar had unloaded that day.

"It feels mighty mushy!" whispered Cato.

"It does, indeed!" breathed Fem, and then, "Good heavens! Cato, save me!" She was head first in the hole that Anetje and Peter in their folly had neglected to refill.

"Cato!" Fem's breath came hard and she struggled to her knees. "Some one has taken it away! It is gone! They came back after—after that night. They suspected from our being here. Ah! how foolish we were! I can never forgive myself. Do not tell the others until we must. They have enough to bear. Poor, poor Anetje! This will break her heart. Fill up the hole, Cato. Let us spare the dear girl.

She would have looked so handsome in the jewels!''

Then, with dragging step, Femmetia went back into the dark house.

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSENGER FROM WASHINGTON

THERE were hard days ahead, days of labor and heartache. But, strange to say, the rigid life seemed to agree with Mr. Stryker, and his improved health was perhaps the one thing that brightened the changed life. His indignation over the outrages of the English soldiers encamped in Midtown made him forget his bodily weakness; and the necessity for all to work unless they chose to starve or beg, roused him to lend a hand. The crops which had been so plentiful had either been confiscated by the English or burned by the Dutch before they fell into alien hands. The pretty village was sadly wrecked as to homes and churches, and a desolate air hung over all except as it was resolutely dispelled by those true-hearted, sturdy folk.

Of course there was no law, unless the rough soldiery chose to enforce it. Here and there

was an honest, good-natured officer to whom the people could go, make complaint, and get redress; but, as often was the case, injustice and ill treatment went unavenged except a sturdy farmer, unusually brave, took the law into his own hands, and then there *was* a scene.

Mr. Stryker was so wrought upon by an outrage perpetrated upon Cæsar one day that he surprised his family as well as the Britishers, by his valiant and timely interference.

Poor Cæsar, bowed down by discouragement and indignation, was at work in a field near the house ploughing and reviling the situation, when a couple of dashing Englishmen walked into the field and up to the amazed Cæsar, who, while he loathed them, looked upon them in awed terror.

"Take those horses out of harness!" commanded one valiant fellow; "the King has need of just such animals."

"Dese hosses ain't mine, sah," promptly replied Cæsar.

"Well, if your old, sick master cannot protect his property what can he expect? Unharness, I say!"

"To de Lawd, massa!" Cæsar exclaimed, roused to sudden frenzy. "If yo' want dese hosses you-uns jest got ter 'tend to dem yo'self." With this piece of unlooked-for impudence, the old darkey ran as if the Evil One himself was after him, up to the house.

"Dose Satans has got our only hosses," he roared to Mr. Stryker, who sat in the late sunshine on the back porch. "Dey is unhitchin' of dem dis instan'. Whar Miss Fem?"

"This is no time to call for women!" said the master, turning red, and dashing down the steps. "You bring my gun, Cæsar. The rascals will *now* reckon with me!"

Almost paralyzed with surprise, Cæsar hastened to obey, and Mr. Stryker, in his noiseless shoes, and with quick steps, bore down upon the foe. Now it so happened that the worthy pair were bending with their backs toward the approaching avenger; a hedge of alder bushes was between them, and they did not hear his footsteps. Mr. Stryker had in his hand a long, heavy stick. Once he thought he could not walk without it. Now he held it aloft and with a white,

steady hand, aimed a well-directed blow, and the stout weapon fell across both foreign backs with all the force of outraged Dutch justice.

The fellows leaped into the air with a yell of pain and fright, the horses plunged and ran for the barn, and Mr. Stryker stood before his men.

For a full moment they gazed, surprised and shocked, rubbing their bruised backs. Not very dignified figures, to be sure, and one, a round baby-faced boy, looked as though he were going to cry. But suddenly the situation reversed itself, and the older of the two summoned his scattered wits and drew his weapon.

"This means death!" he said, with an angry flash of his eyes. And perhaps it might have meant so, if it had not been for Cæsar, who just then raised his woolly head above the bushes and remarked solemnly: "Well, den, if it does, it ain't goin' ter be my massa. I'se cross-eyed, gemmen. It doan't make no kind of difference which one of you moves, *dat's* de one dat is goin' ter die fust!"

And sure enough, through the branches peeped the muzzle of the old gun in a distract-

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ingly impartial position, and the eyes *were* so crossed that neither man dared to hope the old darkey was looking at the other.

"Do not shoot, Cæsar!" said Mr. Stryker coolly. "But," turning to the two abject fellows, "you lead on, and go to your officer. I intend to find out just how far your impudence is upheld."

"An' you walk fast and straight," warned Cæsar, "or de tails ob your coats goin' ter be riddled with my bullets."

Thus compelled, the sorry pair led on and straight to the headquarters of Lieutenant Langly, who was their superior officer. The young man saw the procession advancing, and to save his life he could not help laughing. However, mirth fled when he heard the tale, and after ordering the miscreants off under arrest, he turned to Mr. Stryker.

"Your household, sir," he said with charming frankness, "seems to be well protected. Once before I saw some of our men routed from your property. They went to steal then, I fear—"

"And they succeeded only too well," sighed Mr. Stryker.

"Surely not *that* time!" said young Langly.

"I cannot tell when," said the older man. "I only know that our little *all* was unearthed from the hearthstone, and we must now begin again."

"Why, sir, it was gone when our men made the raid. I happened, unfortunately, to be an unwilling member of the party, and I know there was no treasure there when they did their hunting. They say all is fair in war, sir, but I do not believe in it. The affair is a thing of the past, but I can assure you, sir, that so far as I know, our men are guiltless of bringing that misfortune upon you." Here he came nearer and said in lower tone, "It was the belief at the time that one of your own people had already taken it!"

Mr. Stryker started back as if struck. "No one of *my* people would be so vile!" he said.

"Time may prove the reverse," Langly made reply. "But for the present, Mr. Stryker, I

will promise you my protection, and should you need my assistance, pray come to me."

Whereupon Mr. Stryker and Cæsar, greatly mollified, turned their faces homeward, and around the logs that evening the story of the afternoon was rehearsed to an awestruck audience. When the treasure was referred to it had a peculiar effect upon the family. Mrs. Stryker shook her head dolefully; Femmetia's face was raised sadly, but firmly, while Anetje grew quite pale and drooped in her corner like a guilty soul. Out in the kitchen old Cæsar was giving his version, and he ended by saying:

"If I ebber come 'cross de rascal dat teched de treasure, fo' heabben I'll lay my stick ober his back like my massa worked his dis afternoon!" Whereupon poor Peter, who was crouching in the chimney-corner, sprang suddenly out into the room and nearly frightened them all to death by promptly going into a fit, from which Aunt Juno had great difficulty in bringing him.

So the slow days of autumn dragged on. There was much work and little play, and the stronger must help feed the weaker, and, at the same time,

be at the mercy of raiding parties who might take even the little that was stored away.

"It does seem," said Femmetia one day to Anetje, "that we might think up some way to help along a little. Just look at Father, Netje, out there in Scotland. Wouldn't you think he was a new father? Trouble has cured him."

Now "Scotland" was a rich pasture, so called because a blue flower grew there which some one had likened to Scotch heather, and had so dubbed the meadow Scotland.

"I really do not see what we can do," moaned Anetje. "We work early and late. We *might* peddle our few vegetables. I had thought of that, but we have only two horses and they are being worked all the time!"

"Besides," gravely added Fem, "Father and Mother would never allow you to do such a brazen thing, Netje. You are too pretty and silly."

"Thank you," whimpered Netje.

"But you are," laughed Fem. "Some Englishman might fall in love with you, my dear, and it would make an international dis-

turbance. I never realized before how grateful I should be for being the ugly duck."

"Oh, you're not so fearfully ugly," comforted Anetje, unconsciously. "I guess Father would not let *you* peddle either."

"Netje," Fem drew near and whispered, "I have an inspiration. A really brilliant one."

"Umph!" sniffed Anetje. "Let's hear it."

"Just look at Scotland! A perfect feast for lots of horses, and only old Fritz and Dot to enjoy its richness. Since the English have taken to protecting us because they are so awfully *afraid* of us!"—Fem rolled her eyes in an ecstasy over a joke Anetje did not know—"not a King's man has done more than talk *at* us from the road. Netje, *their* horses have not *enough* to eat! I'm going to peddle our pasture lot to them!"

"What?" gasped Anetje. Her mind could not grasp this mighty scheme.

"You just wait," laughed Fem. "Do not say a thing about it, but when I come home I'll have a fine tale to tell you or my name is not Femmetia Stryker."

"They—they *may* fall in love with you?" faltered Anetje.

"The horses?" mimicked Fem. "I certainly shall do all in my power to make them. I bet they'll like my food at any rate." With that she danced away upstairs and soon returned decked out, to her sister's horror, in Anetje's finery.

"My best gown and bonnet!" cried Anetje. "You shall not!" But Fem was gone, walking very rapidly and with extreme dignity down the lane.

"Whar dat foolish Miss Anetje a-goin'?" asked Cato, just then coming into the room with an armful of wood.

"Oh!" wailed Anetje herself, turning from the window. "It isn't I, it's that unprincipled Fem in my clothes, going down to peddle Scotland to the English officers!"

"Fo' de Lawd!" cried Cato dropping his wood with an awful clatter. "An' widout me! Now what is a-goin' to occur?"

Soon after, something very interesting was occuring at the headquarters of the King's men.

Femmetia, very demure and gentle, stood with downcast eyes, begging permission to see Lieutenant Langly on important business. "And tell him," she said to the man on guard, "that it is Miss Stryker."

She was soon told to follow, and so she presented herself with downcast eyes before the young officer.

"Ah!" said he with smiling good-humor, "it is the handsome Miss Stryker. Your reputation has gone abroad."

Fem raised her fresh, honest face.

"No," she faltered. "I'm just the handsome one's sister. But I've a great head for business."

A smile grew upon the listener's lips.

"And you have come to me to help you?" he asked. "I shall be very glad to do what I can. I told your father so some time ago."

"Indeed, sir," sighed Fem, dropping her eyes, "I ask for no favors. We have never entertained so large a company before, and you and your men, sir, are expensive. I should like to help my father to provide his share of the en-

tertainment, and I think I can. Now we have a rich pasture lot near our house, which, by your gracious kindness—'' Anetje herself could not have flushed more prettily under her own bonnet. The young man pulled his mustache and his eyes twinkled. Surely the less handsome Miss Stryker was interesting—''has escaped the universal destruction. We have only two horses now; the others,'' with a deeper blush ''have been dedicated to the service of King George. Now, if you would like to *board* your horses in our pasture, and will further promise protection to us, we will, for a slight consideration, accommodate you.''

Langly gave a broad grin. This was delicious. But Femmetia, adopting Anetje's manner with her raiment, was a picture of shy girlhood.

''I am sure the King would sanction his servants in accepting so rare an offer.'' Langly bowed low before the girl. ''I for one shall avail myself of the opportunity at once, and will drive my horse down this evening.''

"And the price?" Fem's tone was sternly businesslike.

"Is what you choose to make it, Miss Stryker."

"I will arrange it with my father." Fem was about to turn from the room, when the officer stayed her.

"You have asked for my protection, Miss Stryker, and I freely promise it, but *I* must ask for yours!"

"For mine?" The girl turned sharply.

"For yours. Your place has a warlike reputation, indeed a most unsavory one. I, myself, was fired on once, from a corn-crib, and upon that same occasion my superior officer was shot in the arm, and a brother officer was foully attacked with—with a broomstick!"

"How—how do you *know* it was a broomstick?" asked Fem, turning scarlet.

"Because I had my suspicions at the time, and I went back alone afterward, and after grubbing around under the crib I—I found the treasure! Some Englishwoman shall have the

pleasure of gazing upon it some day, Miss Stryker. I have *that* satisfaction."

"You—you went back alone, and found it?" As the thoughts formed themselves, Fem's face grew terrible in its wrath. "And you *dare* confess it? Oh! I heard your pretended virtue that night, and it was the method you took of getting ahead of your own men! I wish you joy with your stolen treasure. It was our *all*. I hope you will remember to tell the—the Englishwoman *that* along with the rest of the huge joke."

The tirade was so unlooked-for and the misunderstanding so astounding, that Langly stood stupidly staring while the angry girl swept from the room.

"Well!" groaned he, "*I* meant that the broomstick was the treasure and she thought—good heavens! She thought I was actually confessing to the theft of which her father spoke. Gad!" Then he whistled long and sorrowfully.

"I can never make her believe me," he pondered. "Their hatred of us is too well founded. She will always believe me a com-

mon thief unless—" his smile returned, "unless I can trace the treasure and return it. Then she would think it a case of contrition."

He paced the room restlessly, and for all the disturbance felt a deeper interest in life than he had felt since leaving England.

Femmetia strode home with a terrific fire consuming her. She never doubted her conclusions. "The brazen, unprincipled thief!" she sobbed, "and to think he *dared* boast of it! I will tell Anetje only part of the story. Poor, poor child! I will spare her all that I can. And Father in his renewed strength will probably rate me well for what I have done, but it will bring us an honest penny." Just then the sight of Anetje, running down the road to meet her, drove all other thoughts away.

"Fem," gasped Netje, "what *do* you think?"

"Nothing," Fem answered, gloomily.

"Why—why Cousin John is secreted with Father and Mother in the—the best parlor! He is in disguise! I hardly knew him myself." Here Anetje blushed softly, for she and Cousin John had been old-time sweethearts. "He—he

bears a message from General Washington, and —if—he should be discovered he would be shot! Oh! Fem, isn't it awful, and simply divine!"

Femmetia started back. "It's simply awful," she whispered. "But I do hope you haven't breathed a word of this to a single soul."

"Fem! what must you think of me? If—if *you* loved Cousin John you—would understand."

"I can understand without being in love. Come on!"

The girls had barely reached the house when they saw their father beckoning to them.

"Girls," he said, when they came close, "there is a messenger here from our General. Come in and listen to what he has to say."

They followed their father into the big, solemn room, and there, displaying his wares to Mrs. Stryker, was as true a Cheap John peddler as had ever wended his way through Midtown. Surely love made eyes keen, or Femmetia would never have known her cousin.

"Trade is dull," whined the man, putting back his wares wearily.

"And times are hard," said Mrs. Stryker.

"Oh, John!" whispered Anetje. "I knew you at first. Do tell them! I knew you when we met on the road!"

"'Sh!" cautioned Mr. Stryker. Then the group drew close.

"Our General needs a large sum of money!" whispered Cousin John in his deep, true voice. "He has sent messengers all over the Island knowing that each loyal heart will give freely. We are risking our lives by thus coming within the enemy's clutches, but that is a slight matter. The money, General Washington must have!" John had explained this already to his aunt and uncle, but the two cousins were eager for details.

"I knew," he went on, "of your hidden treasure. Was it safe upon your return? I am sure you will not begrudge the better part of it for the cause!"

Four heads drooped sadly.

"It is gone!" groaned Mr. and Mrs. Stryker, thinking of the hearthstone.

"It is gone!" flashed Fem, thinking of the crib. But Anetje spoke no word.

Silence, sad and profound, settled upon them all, and John turned toward the window with a look of dismay upon his strong face. His hope had been great, his failure meant much.

"I know the thief!" exclaimed Fem. Her loyal heart throbbed hotly in the face of this new torture.

At her words Anetje, the guilty, sprang up, and surprised them all by sobbing out as she flung her arms about the dusty peddler: "But, oh! thank God, it is not too late. I have it safe! I have it safe! I meant no harm and there is time!"

"You!" cried Fem. "Why, Anetje Stryker, you are raving mad!"

At this Anetje drew herself up with a fine dignity. "Mad, am I?" she said with a smile that chased away her tears. "I am not mad. I took the treasure the first evening after we came home. Poor Peter and I dug it up and put it in a new place. I wanted to feel *sure,* and prove my own capacity for wisdom. Now I will show you!"

The others stood in helpless amazement while

Anetje, the heroine of the hour, flew about talking like a magpie meanwhile.

"You know, Father, you had this fireplace boarded above the opening?" Down came the gaudy paper screen!

"Now Cousin John, please break the boarding away. Get in the chimney, so! Oh! do be careful, the things are so heavy, they will hit you on the head!"

John dumbly obeyed, and with all his might pried the boarding upward.

"Now," whispered Anetje, "stand back, but catch it as it falls!"

Silence! Nothing fell. Nothing happened.

Then Anetje, with a white, set face, crept into the gaping chimney, looked up through the broken boarding, into the open blue sky!

"Gone!" she sobbed hysterically. "Gone! gone! gone!" Then after a moment, "Peter has taken it! The sparkling things he never forgot. Oh! oh! oh! You may well call me a fool!" Cousin John sought to detain her. His pity for her misery overruled his disappointment and grief, but she was gone.

In a moment she reappeared dragging Peter with her. Her manner and voice had frightened the poor boy almost into a fit.

"Thief!" she hissed between her trembling lips, "tell me where they are—the sparkling things!"

Peter's rambling wits were muddled past all help now. Anetje was pushing him into the broad chimney. He looked up helplessly at the sky.

"The sparkles come at night!" he sobbed. "It's not dark yet!" Then he fell to shaking so miserably, that Mrs. Stryker rescued him from pure pity, and bore him away.

There was nothing more to do; and, with stoical Dutch philosophy, the family listened to Anetje's broken confession in silence.

"I will go," said Cousin John at last. "I dare stay no longer. How sorry I am for it all, I can never say." He began to sling his bundle over his back.

Then Femmetia hurriedly told of her afternoon experience. "Father," she pleaded, "let us take what money we can from the foe, and

give it to our General. Come again in a few weeks, John. We will not have much saved, but I can promise you something. Good-by, good-by!"

And so John plodded on down the dusty road leaving a crushed family behind him.

CHAPTER VII

INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS

WHATEVER Femmetia's private opinion of her sister was, she was sublime in her hiding of the same. Anetje's humility and woe wrung the stronger girl's heart and won her protecting silence.

"Miss Fem," confided Cato one day, as he and Femmetia were out chestnuting, "what you think 'bout Miss Netje? Does yo' think it am starvation don' ail her or 'ligion? I 'clar she look dat white an' still I feel curious. Yo' doesn't t'ink she ebber 'specs 'bout de treasure being gone, does yer?"

Fem went on with her harvesting.

"Oh! I dare say she *wonders* if it is safe, but as long as the corn-crib looks as reasonable as it does now I think she'll have to be content." The girl sighed heavily.

"An' as fur po' Peter," Cato rambled on, "dat chile 'sprises me. He's takin' to talkin'

wid de foe an' runnin' down to their quarters mos' ebbery day."

"What!" Fem dropped her bag and turned a horrified face upon her companion.

"Lor', Miss Fem," he cried, "what don' ail yer? Pon my word, dis state ob things is perfectly onearthly."

Femmetia grew calm under the surprised eyes. "Oh, my nerves are shaky," she laughed. "But seriously, Cato, although I cannot possibly think what Peter could tell that would harm us, I beg of you to keep him away from our foes. Evil communications, you know, Cato, corrupt good manners, and Peter's manners *must* be preserved."

"But you talk to de Britishers yo'self, Miss Fem. Yo' is special chirpy to dat Captin Langly." Femmetia tossed her head.

"I'm getting his money, Cato," she rejoined. "I'm charging him high for the pasturage of his horses. Father lets me conduct that affair, and I tell you I'm making the most of it. Now where there is no money to be gotten, my manners are different, as for instance—"

Here Fem broke off abruptly, seized her half-filled bag, and darted down the embankment toward the house. Cato stood gaping after her. Coming down the road was a big wagon loaded with supplies for the Englishmen, and, to escape a mud-hole in the road, the driver had taken the path in front of the house.

"Keep to the road!" commanded Fem, as she bore down upon the team.

"Keep a civil tongue in your Dutch head!" roared the man in reply. He had had a hard day collecting his load, and his humor was not of the best.

"Look out then!" Fem called back, and to Cato's horror she plunged forward, whirling her bag aloft and whooping like an Indian.

The horses plunged, reared, turned sharply, overturning the wagon, throwing the driver well out of the way, and then running with all the strength that remained in their tired bodies—down the road!

Cato was on the spot in a moment. He was petrified with fear, but he was ready to stand by his young mistress. He thought this act

would mean her execution, at least, and his lips grew white.

"Dis am de end!" he groaned pantingly. "Has yer killed him, Miss Fem?"

"No such good luck," the girl replied. "Here, Cato, while he lies stupidly there, gather these cabbages and turnips in as fast as you can. I warrant you the knave has stolen them all. And here are four turkeys, as I live! Turkeys at this season! Hurry, Cato! See, the fellow is stirring!"

Cato obeyed mechanically, and was bearing an armful away when the prostrate driver sat up and let forth such a yell that it startled even the dauntless Femmetia.

"Help! Help! Help!" cried the man. He was dazed from his fall, and had a muddled idea that the camp had been surprised.

Help came in the form of Mr. Stryker, and when he heard the Dutch and English version of the episode he fell upon Femmetia and Cato, figuratively speaking, in such unlimited indignation that even the fallen foe found it in his heart to pity them.

"Put those things back, Cato!" thundered the master. "And as for you, my girl, a trick or two more like this and I'll lay the rod across your back. Pick yourself up, my man, and go look for your team and wagon. Your load is safe here until you return, and for all repairs I will pay."

Thus soothed and comforted, the fellow arose, wiped the mud from his face on his sleeve, and went on with a stagger.

Mr. Stryker stood guard, and Femmetia and Cato went dejectedly away to hide themselves from a new storm of anger that they saw gathering.

"Oh! what a soldier yo' are, Miss Fem!" whispered Cato when the house stood between them and the irate master. "Lawd! Yo' ain't 'fraid ob nothin'. Wid a broomstick an' a bag ob chestnuts I 'low yo' could lick all de King's men if massa would keep out ob de way!"

"Just think of those turkeys!" Fem shook her head.

"Lawd, yes!" Cato was almost in tears.

"Never mind, Cato. Considering *all* things, I suppose we got off easy."

How much of the story young Langly heard Femmetia did not know, but he rode Spitfire up to the Stryker's the next day himself, and his face wore a dark look of indignation. Femmetia saw him coming and went forth to meet him.

"Here, you scamp!" Langly called to Cato, "take Spitfire away for an hour or two. I have several matters of business to attend to." Then bowing to Femmetia, "I am still to carry on business with you, Miss Stryker?"

"Why—why, surely!" stammered Fem. If Langly were shamming he was doing it fearfully well.

"Then, madam, may I ask what redress *I* am to have? Here one of His Majesty's subjects has been set upon by a furious rebel, the stores for the regiment scattered in the mud, and not long ago a detachment of the King's men were foully dealt with by this same rebel, assisted by conspirators. Pray, madam, what protection am *I* to seek from these—these bloodthirsty so-called patriots?"

Femmetia, long before this speech was ended, was trembling visibly. Personal fear she never knew, but to bring her family into bad repute, to forfeit the slender protection of the man who stood before her, meant ruin! If she had gone too far, then indeed ought she and Anetje to be put under lock and key. There was no doubting the stern face before her. Langly was in a high passion.

"I—I beg your pardon!" stammered Fem, and she thought of how she had once misjudged him about the treasure, and her apology was deeper than he knew. Oh, if she might only tell him, but that was out of the question, and, besides, he had tried to make her believe he had taken it.

"Of course you cannot know," quivered Fem, the dauntless, "how we are tried. We are robbed and insulted by these horrid Britishers, and you expect us to act as if we liked it! Oh, I hate them one and all!"

"If I only knew where her treasure was!" thought Langly, "how glad I would be to change her tears to smiles." As it was he stood silent.

"Oh, you are pirates, all of you!" Fem went vehemently on. "A beautiful lot, and—"

"Femmetia!" The girl dropped her hands as if the man before her had fired a shot. *What* had happened? The stern face had relaxed, a smile hovered over the lips! Did he like being called a pirate?

"*What* did you say?" gasped Fem.

"I only said Femmetia."

"Yes. But *how* did you say it, sir?"

"In fairly good English. My Dutch is defective. Femmetia is a new name to me. I shall have to practice it a great deal."

"You need not trouble," interrupted Fem, regaining her usual spirit. "I hope God and the King will soon remove you from our village, and the sooner you forget the name the better."

"I shall never forget it. Neither God nor the King can take from me that memory."

"Please remember you are speaking to a patriot, Lieutenant Langly—a patriot *and* a rebel!"

"She will not always be so."

"She will, indeed!"

"Not to me."

"Why?" For her life, Fem could not hide her interest.

"Because," and here the young man came nearer, "I must do my duty and while *that* calls I must serve my King. Afterward, when these loyal patriots come into their own, as, under God, I honestly believe they will, I shall come back, not as a conqueror, but as a suppliant, and their cause shall be my cause, their people my people, and then,—Femmetia?"

"And then?" The girl's brown eyes took on a new and serious light. "And then we shall see, sir, if the memories are not *too* black in that far-away day. We shall see."

A silence fell between them as they stood. When it was broken it was broken by Fem's calm voice.

"I have your bill for pasturage ready, sir, and I promise to—to protect your men and vegetables in the future."

Langly smiled broadly, and held out the money to his hard-headed neighbor.

"Will you shake hands, Miss Fem?" he said.

Fem looked him squarely and steadily in the eyes. "I cannot shake the hand of—of a foe!" she whispered, and then turned away with her hard-won money.

Every cent earned from the pasturage was put in the cupboard and saved for that day when Cousin John would come again upon another dangerous collecting tour. News sifted through the British lines to the farmhouses in Midtown, of Washington's brave struggle, his undying belief in victory, and his earnest request for money to carry on the work. It was a risky thing for messengers to disguise themselves and come into the very teeth of the enemy begging for funds to carry on the unequal fight, but even this the loyal hearts were ready to undertake. What suffering and privation the patriots endured, that from their meager store, they might give to these messengers, who can tell? They counted it not misery, but glory, to so further their noble General in his work.

Anetje, humble and often tearful, sat over her knitting day by day, producing stockings which

she sold to the Britishers, and as she worked she thought of Cousin John. He had gone away apparently loving her even after her folly. How long Anetje and John might have remained silent sweethearts, was never to be known, for the war had unloosed John's tongue and opened Anetje's girlish heart. And now her cousin's courage in the disappointment brought about by her folly and conceit made more of a woman of her than anything else.

"I'm just fit to be ordered about," she confided to Femmetia. "Oh, *such* a wife as I shall make!" Fem held her peace and forbore to express her opinion, but she loved her sister more than before the humility and remorse had touched her.

In vain did both sisters in various ways try to get poor Peter to explain why he had taken the treasure and where he had hidden it, but at the mere mention of the thing, Peter gave signs of going into a fit, and finally the subject was never referred to.

His visits to the British soldiers worried Fem a good deal. Simple-minded as he was, a

shrewd questioner might learn much, even while Peter's intentions were of the best.

"I wish I could keep a string on him," Fem said to Cato. "But one is too busy these days to pay much attention to strings or idiots. Oh, dear, oh, dear, if Anetje had only been less ambitious!"

So since no string, moral or physical, was tied to poor Peter, and because with no fear of the schoolmaster catching and educating him, the boy wandered far and wide gathering information and unconsciously giving out what he had much better have kept to himself.

One thought alone formed itself day by day in Peter's poor, weak mind. Much misery had befallen the people who were kind to him because of the visit of the Cheap John that nerve-wearing day, when Anetje had fallen upon Peter like an avenging spirit. Therefore, it behooved the boy to see to it that the Cheap John should never again come to disturb them. But who was strong enough to prevent? Why the big, swaggering soldiers, to be sure! So to their headquarters stole poor Peter, and gazed with

imploring eyes upon them, not knowing how to approach the theme that was slowly consuming him. His days were filled with terrors, lest he should come upon the peddler; and his nights were made dreadful by the reappearance of the stranger, in visionary shape. Life was not worth living in those days, and Peter's only moments of relief were those spent in the vicinity of the King's men.

And one never-to-be-forgotten day Peter *saw* the dreaded Cheap John actually selling articles to the Britishers! The boy's fear was so apparent and real that the idle soldiers noticed it, and began to joke him about it.

"'Fraid he'll steal you, Simpy?" one laughed.

"No." Peter shook his head. "He won't steal me, he steals other things."

"What, for instance?" asked another.

Peter drew near; for the peddler was still in sight, going toward a farmhouse. "I don't know what he wants to steal, but he comes for something."

"Comes where, Simpy?" Peter's eyes roved.

"He makes Miss Anetje all white and awful;

and the others grow still, still, still! Miss Anetje she pushed me in the chimney, but it was not there. I put it there, but it was gone!"

"What was gone, moon calf?"

"All the sparkles and shiny things!"

The sentence fell upon the listeners with strange force. It was evident to one and all that there was a something about the peddler that Peter understood and that they did not. And the treasure of the Stryker household! Did they not all know about that? So the Cheap John had a disturbing influence over the Strykers, eh? Well, then it must be reported to the head officer. Here was a mystery, indeed.

Oh, if Fem had only had a string tied to Peter that unlucky day!

But Fem was working in the fields and Anetje was knitting, and crying as she knit, and she thought upon Cousin John and his dangerous trips in, and near, the lion's den.

"When this war is over," she murmured, knitting a tear into the gray yarn, "I will work so for John! And never, never while I live will I say nay when he says yea. 'Tis not for a

woman to think, 'tis her part to obey. Fem should have been a boy. She'll bring shame upon herself because she *will* think for herself. But then,—'' with a comforting sob—''no man would ever dare marry Fem, so she'll have to think for herself. Fem shall come to live with John and me by and by, and when John is abroad, she may do my thinking, for I shall always be too busy.''

CHAPTER VIII

CORNERED

"JOHN!" whispered Mrs. Stryker, "is it safe?"

The peddler dropped his bundle upon the table in the living-room, and wiped the dust from his weary face.

Very worn and thin was Cousin John. Hardship was telling even upon his strong body. His eyes rested upon Anetje lovingly, but she went on with her knitting as a demure Dutch maiden should. The servants were coming in and out, it would never do for them to suspect. Femmetia sat near the window adding accounts, and keeping an eye roadward; while Mr. Stryker, from the cloud of smoke arising from his long-stemmed pipe, warned his good wife to think twice ere she spent anything; for days were bitter hard and worse ones were coming.

"It had to be, aunt!" John whispered back.

"Money we must have, and you thought you might be able to save a little."

"We have a small sum, John. Fem, edge to the cupboard, put your book away and bring me the pewter teapot," she whispered. Aloud she went on, "And what will you give me in exchange for the pewter?"

This last was for Juno's benefit, who was fluttering about fairly trembling with delight over a yellow bandana.

Fem concluded her accounts and arose slowly.

"Mother!" she said calmly, although her face was white and set, "there are a number of Britishers coming up the lane, Peter is with them, and I think Lieutenant Langly is leading them. Perhaps—perhaps it would be just as well if you sent Anetje out on the porch to entertain them."

Calmly as the words were spoken, they carried dismay to every heart. Poor Peter in his mistaken loyalty had led the foe right to the doors of the only real friends he had on earth!

"What dose scamps after now?" exclaimed Juno, dropping the bandana.

"Fem, the closet!" said Mr. Stryker, and his eyes were full of meaning.

Femmetia nodded and, looking at her sister, she said: "They may be after something quite different from what we fear. You have more at stake than the rest of us, and God knows we all have enough. Keep them out, Anetje, keep them out!" Then, grasping the peddler by the arm, she said, simply, "Come!"

He followed dumbly. This, perhaps, was the end—the end of all his brave young dreams!

Not one word of good-by, not one regret, just a stolid determination to go to the very last, and try to serve until life itself was gone.

"Hurry!" Fem pushed him before her into the closet, the door closed upon him and her, and, with a fast-beating heart, Anetje ran out upon the porch to do the hardest thing she had ever done in her life.

Peter and the six or seven soldiers stood by the gate. Young Langly was mounting the steps as Anetje stepped from the hallway.

"Ah!" cried the girl, and she felt the smile and the flush rush to her cheeks; " a social visit,

Lieutenant Langly! We are most glad to see you, sir. 'Tis not much we have to offer, but what is ours is at your disposal."

There was an unconscious joke in this that was worthy of Fem. Young Langly's face was deeply serious, and he said quietly: "If your sister is at home, Miss Stryker, may I see her?"

"She—she—is *not* at home!" Anetje fluttered. "She—she—has gone to—to Scotland!"

"Gone where?" exclaimed Langly.

"Gone to Scotland, to pick flowers—I mean to—to look after the horses!"

"Miss Anetje," the young man's eyes were full of pity; "of course I know that your sister has not gone to Scotland, and it's rather late for flowers. Pray tell me where she is. Much—much depends upon it."

Then Anetje began to laugh, long and merrily. The more she laughed the merrier she grew, and Langly became positively alarmed.

"Are your father and mother in?" he asked.

"No!" shrieked Anetje. "They've all gone to Scotland, every one of them, servants and all. It was such a beautiful afternoon, you know. I

was just going myself. Now that you are here, Mr. Langly, pray come with me, you and your men. The more the merrier. I see Peter down there, *he* ought to be shot, but if you will *only* come we'll take him, too."

"The girl is mad with fear!" thought the young officer, and his duty became doubly hard.

"I don't believe you know where Scotland is?" Anetje was saying. "I'll bet you one of my silver buckles that you don't know!"

"Why it's a near neighbor of mine when I am at home," Langly replied, humoring her.

"It's nearer to you now than then," laughed Anetje, going off into fresh peals of mirth. "It's the meadow lot, Mr. Langly, the lot where your Spitfire is put to graze. It is a joke. Oh! why do you not laugh?"

"Miss Anetje," Langly came near and bent his head as he spoke, "if I possibly can manage it, I must speak to your sister. Duty comes first, but for—for myself I plead one word with her before I perform my duty. May I see her?"

"You may not!" Anetje's voice rang firm and clear.

When the British Came.

"'I FORBID YOUR ENTERING!' SHE SAID DISTINCTLY."

"Then I have only my duty to perform."

"I—do—not—understand you!" The smile left the girl's face. "What is—your duty?"

Langly called to his men to surround the house, then sadly he continued: "Miss Stryker, we have traced to your home a rebel patriot in the disguise of a peddler. We know that he is here, and it is my painful duty to take him dead or alive. Permit me to pass, please."

Anetje was bracing herself against the door-posts.

"I forbid your entering!" she said distinctly. "You have promised to protect us, and here you stand ready at the first opportunity to actually walk over the dead body of a young girl, and desecrate our home."

"Do not compel me to be more brutal than is absolutely necessary," pleaded the man. "Stand aside, Miss Anetje. Try to trust me. I am determined to do my duty, but—but you have made it needlessly hard for all of us. A word with your sister might have saved us all,—much!" Then, seeing that Anetje had no intention of

moving, Langly firmly put her aside, and strode into the house.

"Father!" called the girl, frenzied with fear, "the—the British spy is coming in!"

The group in the living-room stood rigidly waiting. They had all risen, and, from Mr. Stryker to Cato—for the servants were all there—they flinched not, although they saw only disaster ahead. For, when Femmetia had rushed her prisoner into the closet, she had pulled the peddler's pack after her, little heeding what was happening, and there, in a tell-tale trail straight to the closet-door lay needles, thread, and gaudy ribbons, a mute testimony to the family guilt!

Langly saw it at once, and his pale face grew paler. Even in his desperation he had trusted Femmetia's keenness more than that.

"Why do you force your way in, sir, where, surely you must know, under all circumstances, you are most unwelcome?" Mr. Stryker's voice rang hard and cold.

"Not from choice," answered Langly, "do I come. But you have hidden, at present, under your roof, a most dangerous rebel. One who

not only wanders in disguise in and out of the lines, but is known to have on his person papers of great importance, and money which he intends to carry to—to Washington. This man it is my painful duty to find and arrest, and I must search your house." Juno groaned aloud and Cato turned gray as he listened.

"Proceed then in the performance of your duty," said Mr. Stryker, "and leave my house as soon as possible."

Much as Langly's own heart dictated to him to start on a wild hunt through the upper part of the house first, he knew it would be but folly; for, even if Femmetia made a desperate effort to set her prisoner free, the house was guarded and other hands, less merciful than his own, would do the work.

"Mr. Stryker!" Langly's tones were low and full of pain, "what I do as one of His Majesty's subjects, I, as a man, deplore. In that closet is a traitor to the King. A dangerous enemy. I must, therefore, secure him and hand him over to justice."

So speaking, Langly strode to the closet, and,

as his hand touched the lock, Anetje, with a scream, fell on the floor in a faint.

Open slammed the door, and there, crouching beneath a shelf, was the dangerous enemy, the traitor to the King, in the form of Femmetia Stryker!

"Miss Fem!" gasped Langly, "you! and alone?"

"I, and alone. Please, may I come out? I will be a good girl."

The relief caused Langly to laugh aloud.

"He—he is not here?" The relief was evident in Langly's voice.

"He? Whom do you mean, Lieutenant Langly? Is it a custom in *your* country for young ladies to entertain their gentlemen friends in the china-closet?"

"The—the peddler?"

"The peddler, sir? You grow insulting. But if you would imply that any one is hidden here, do, I beseech you, search the sugar-bowl and tea-cups. We've had little use for tea since that little unpleasantness in Boston. You may find dust. I declare, the sight of your gallant men

coming up the lane has undone the entire family! Perhaps you are satisfied now. I think you have *killed* Anetje."

But Langly was looking at the tell-tale trail on the floor.

"Miss Fem, what are these?"

"Shall I say them in Dutch or English?"

"English, please."

"Thread, needles, and ribbons."

"They belong to—"

"Me!" Fem flashed forth. "And now, Juno, gather up what I dropped, and run for the salts. Anetje is fainting while we stand gaping."

Langly was taken completely off his guard. The girl's tones and manner were too real. He must look further. It seemed a farce, for well the young officer knew that in some incomprehensible way, Femmetia Stryker had again outwitted the King's men. And he was glad of it!

The search was soon over. Very thoroughly the house was ransacked from attic to cellar. Nothing was locked. Everything was open and innocent. The dangerous rebel was certainly not there.

Shamefacedly the men departed.

Peter, in disgrace, both with royalist and patriot, stood by the fence and raised his voice to high heaven in the forlorn wail of the outcast. No one noticed him, for inside the house events pressed close and fast.

Anetje slowly came to her senses while yet the enemy was in sight.

"He is safe!" whispered Fem, and all the smelling-salts in the world were not equal to those words.

"Do come to yourself, Netje, and enjoy this scene. I vow it is the greatest lark I've ever seen!" Then Fem turned to her mother. No one in the family had recovered from the shock as soon as she.

"Mother," she said, "have a quantity of food ready. We must get Cousin John off as soon as it is dark. But first Netje must see him and bid him farewell."

Mrs. Stryker hurried away to fulfill the order, and Anetje sat up quite recovered. The early autumn twilight was falling, and a coming storm

made the approaching night one befitting a dangerous escape.

An hour passed. Surely it was safe now! Only the family was in the living-room. The servants, reviving from their late terrors, were eating in the kitchen. Fem tiptoed across the room and locked the doors. Then she drew the heavy red curtains across the windows. The others watched her with eager eyes, but no one spoke. After all this was done, the girl ran to the closet-door, listened, then cautiously opened it, stepped in, extended her arm; something gave a click, and then—

"Cousin John, you may come out!"

The scene was so unreal and weird that poor Anetje almost went into another faint.

There was a pause, then a strange noise inside the closet, and out stepped the peddler, very dusty, very hot, and terribly excited! Not only his sack was he dragging after him, but a bundle done up in an old table-cloth, and a brass-bound box! Even Fem gave a muffled cry and started back.

"What—what is that?" she gasped, pointing to the load.

"I found them in there!" breathed the utterly dumfounded cousin. "Are they—*can* they be the—treasure?"

"They are! They can!" sobbed Anetje springing to her feet and dancing around them like a maddened Indian.

"Oh, Father, we put them in the parlor-chimney. How could they get in the china-closet?"

"You thought you put them in the chimney," Mr. Stryker explained. "But there is a false chimney on the roof, the exit from the secret passage. Come here!"

They all followed, and one by one they looked into the opening through which Cousin John had come, and there, just as poor Peter had found it, they saw the queer chimney, with its rough bits of wood for steps, and up—up above—the dark autumn night!

"And Fem knew?" whispered Anetje.

"Fem knew!" And Mr. Stryker put his arm proudly about his older daughter. "Fem knew.

I could trust Fem, and she has indeed proven herself worthy."

Cousin John saw Anetje's face twitch, and he drew her to him.

"Never mind, little maid," he whispered, "you made good use of the passage all unknowingly. When the war is over—then—then, Anetje, may I come to collect something besides money?"

"Yes," quivered Anetje. "You may come and take a silly—silly—little girl who *tried* to act wisely." And Cousin John beamed through his dust and weariness as if the thought of a silly girl was the dearest thought on earth.

"But how shall we disguise Cousin John?" Fem interrupted in her eminently practical way. "He must be a Cheap John no longer." Here was a puzzle to be sure. As few risks as possible must be taken. For, beside his own precious life, John would have on his person the valuable papers and a goodly amount of money —for all the gold coins were added to the little sum saved. He must reach Washington in

safety, and the peddler was too well known now to be longer a good disguise.

"Make him into a Cato!" laughed Fem spiritedly. "Run, Father, get Cato's clothes—his other suit!"

It was soon done, and with a blackened face and a slouched hat, providing the storm and darkness held good, the second edition of Cato had a fair chance to get away.

At nine o'clock he stole out, after a silent and loving farewell. The rain fell in torrents, and the darkness was dense. As John hurried away, Cato, coming from the barn, passed him.

"Lawd!" moaned the poor fellow, "dis *am* the end ob dis chile. I has seen *myself* an' dat means sartin' death!" John dared not pause to reassure him, but fled on. Down the lane he encountered poor Peter huddled under a clump of bushes.

"Cato," sobbed the boy, "Cato, will they let me in?"

"Yes," muttered Cato the second, his pity for the child staying him. "Go in, Peter, and

tell them to take good care of you until the—war is over."

Past the half-drunken sentinels the messenger worked his way, keeping to paths known to his boyish feet, and thus in safety he reached, at break of day, the patriot army encamped on Manhattan Island.

The next morning as Fem stood near the pasture fence watching Cato water the horses, Lieutenant Langly rode up. He looked very serious and weary, but a smile was on his lips.

"I am going home to—England!" he said.

"To exhibit your broomstick?" rippled Femmetia. She had never referred to the misunderstanding before.

Langly remembered, and laughed. "No, but to tell them of the girl behind the broom."

"Maybe it was Cato," falteringly.

"No mere man or boy could wield a broom like that." The weariness was passing from the young officer's face. "It takes a Dutch maid to do such a valiant act."

"I—have—always wanted to tell—you," Fem stammered, "that I knew soon—after—leaving

you that day—that—that it was not you who took the treasure. I meant—to tell—but—but several things have—occurred *since* then—and—and—''

''So you know who did take the treasure?''

''Yes.''

''Was it one of our men?''

''No. It was taken by one of our own people.''

''I told your father so. I think I could put my hand on the thief.''

''I wouldn't, Lieutenant Langly. She might scream.''

''She? I do not understand. Was it a woman who took it?''

''Yes, and an idiot boy who hid it, but it is General Washington who will use most of it. You see, good sir, you cannot hope to win against a foe whose idiots and women can outwit you.''

''I desire no victory over such a brave people. They have gained a victory over me.''

''Good-by, Lieutenant Langly. I wish you a safe and happy voyage home. Once, I would

have hoped that the ocean might engulf you—but—but I do not now!"

"Will you shake hands, Miss Fem?"

"I *cannot* shake the hand—of a foe!" Something blurred the brave, true eyes.

"I shall return some day, Miss Fem."

"May *that* voyage outdo this one," smiled the girl, "if it be a voyage that brings a friend to my own dear land!"

"It will bring a friend, Femmetia. Farewell, brave, true heart, until I come!"

He was gone, with bowed head and never a backward look. And Fem, the dauntless, looked far over the autumn-tinted meadow-land and she saw a raging, storm-tossed sea! Her face grew pale and set, and once she moved as if to recall the fading figure on the road—but he was a foe, and she kept silent. Then she saw, beyond the fear of the mighty sea, a home-coming of a friend, and the girlish face grew bright and rosy with the thought.

"Until then—farewell!" She waved her hand until the tall figure was hidden from view by a turn in the road. "You are a bad Brit-

isher,'' she laughed, her radiant nature rising supreme, ''a very bad Britisher, indeed, but I have hopes of making a good patriot out of you some day. There's good material in you, and—and I flatter myself you have fallen on fertile soil.''

She dashed off the tears, and turned to her daily tasks, once more a simple little patriot maid.

THE END